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HEALING THROUGH CARING AND KNOWLEDGE-MAKING
IN EVERYDAY FOOD PRACTICES AMONG LGBTQ+
BLACK, INDIGENOUS, PEOPLE OF COLOUR

by

Elizabeth Grace Wong

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Psychology

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2024

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ABSTRACT

Healing Through Caring and Knowledge-Making in Everyday Food Practices

Among LGBTQ+ Black, Indigenous, People of Colour

by

Elizabeth Grace Wong, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 2024

Major Professor: Dr. Renee V. Galliher
Department: Psychology

Framed within Borderland Theory (Anzaldúa, 1987), HEART model (Chavez-Dueñas, 2019), and Integrated Identity Development (Galliher et al., 2017), I posit that everyday food practices and hybridities a) reflect our interrelatedness with one another, b) embody the interwoven nature of care and knowledge-making, and c) are crucial for collective healing. Everyday food practices reflect daily behaviours of preparation, cooking, eating, and sharing, which maps individuals' identities, social roles, and cultural contexts. More broadly, food practices reflect the impact of colonialism, imperialism, and oppression, and highlight its potential for collective healing, cultural consciousness and connection, and community building. This study explores the healing within caring and knowledge-making embedded within daily food practices through photovoice and interviews, among 14 Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) individuals who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ+), from United States and Canada. Participants photographed food moments across two weeks, brought photos as artefacts

during a semi-structured interview at four weeks, and responded to a follow-up after eight months.

Participants' food micromoments involved: a) personal definitions of healing; b) idiosyncratic expressions to food; c) creative and aesthetic inclinations; and d) intentionality and gratitude as daily orientations. They experienced caring and connection through social aspects of sharing and receiving food: a) expressing affect and affection; b) individualizing food to express care; and c) connecting to a sense of togetherness, home, and family. Participants connected to food on a cultural level by engaging with values such as resourcefulness and marking special occasions. Participants experience of food's historical memory included: a) connecting with ancestry, land, and the sacred; b) acknowledging of oppression, such as colonialism, racism, patriarchy, and transphobia; and c) creating memories and knowledges. Lastly, la Mezcla elaborated on food as a landscape of contested notions of authenticity and hybridity, and an arena for new family traditions, given caregivers' roles as knowledge keepers. Seven participants endorsed increased mindfulness around food practices and seven participants reported increased awareness and connection to their background, loved ones, and communities through said practices at the eight-month follow-up.

Overall, daily intimacies around food offer an avenue for healing through intentional engagement, care, reflection on our interbeing, and knowledge transmission. As we deepen our historical memory through home and hybrid knowledges, participants remind us to do this with care and attention to its intergenerational contexts. Clinical and systemic interventions, including our connections to indigenous food sovereignty, are discussed.

(261 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Healing Through Caring and Knowledge-Making in Everyday Food Practices

Among LGBTQ+ Black, Indigenous, People of Colour

Elizabeth Grace Wong

Three different models are used in this study to understand how everyday food practices carry healing potential through the interwoven process of caring and knowledge-making. Daily food practices reflect a mixture of tradition and modernity—borne out of our roots and our contexts. Anzaldúa’s (1987) Borderland Theory helps us understand how this mixture is made by people who straddle two borders or worlds and contest those confines. Chavez-Dueñas et al.’s (2019) HEART model names strengthening our cultural and familial traditions and roots as part of the broader processes of building cultural consciousness and connection, and engaging in collective healing. Finally, Galliher et al.’s (2017) Integrated Identity Development maps our identities and deep interconnectedness with one another, observed in daily food behaviours like cooking, eating, and sharing. This study uses food photos and interviews of 14 Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) individuals, who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ+) from United States and Canada, to explore how they heal, learn, and make meaning of their food practices. Participants photographed food moments across two weeks, brought these photos during a semi-structured interview at four weeks, and responded to a follow-up after eight months.

Participants’ daily food moments reflected their personal, social, and cultural contexts. Individually, participants shared definitions of healing, and intentionality and

gratitude as important wellness attitudes. They experienced caring and connection through social aspects of sharing and receiving food, particularly individualizing food to express care and connecting to a sense of togetherness. Participants connected to food on a cultural level by engaging with values such as resourcefulness and marking special occasions. Participants experienced food's historical memory by connecting with ancestry, land, and the sacred, acknowledging oppression, and creating memories. Lastly, food is a landscape of contradictory notions of authenticity and hybridity, and an arena to develop new family traditions, given caregivers' roles as knowledge keepers. Seven participants endorsed increased mindfulness around food practices and seven participants reported increased awareness and connection to their background, loved ones, and communities at the eight-month follow-up. Deepening our knowledges about our home and remaining flexible with tradition helps us keep intergenerational teachings.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to every person who has ever fed me and shared a little bit more about their stories, favourites, histories, and love. You have nourished my heart and spirit, and it is through your care that I was inspired to write about the ways you all have moved me. Thank you to the Social Sciences Humanities Research Council of Canada for funding this study. Thank you to all the participants who have offered their stories—this work would not exist without you.

I offer my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Renee, for your patience, constancy, warmth, openness, curiosity, and advocacy. Your identity development model and scholarship, and loving and resolute hands guided this dissertation. Thank you for opening your home to me, throughout the years and particularly within these past months, to help me write and feel at home. You have watered the seedlings of this work and pruned my many incoherent drafts. I am blessed to be paired with an advisor who looked after me in so many ways.

To my committee, it is an honour to be read closely by you—your intellectual and sincere contributions have changed me. Thank you very much, Melanie, your encompassing presence and embrace in my clinical, research, didactic, and advocacy work—and for your many abrazos and meals. Your warmth expanded my notions of how to carry myself professionally and personally. My sincerest thanks to Melissa, for our work together this year and the ways you have held and fed me—I carry your kindness with me. Tyler, thank you for your guidance from my first committee and clinical supervision; I cherish your keen eyes, earnest questions, and wisdom. It is a privilege to

be guided by your HEART work, Nayeli—thank you for expanding and grounding my thinking with the heart.

Thank you to my labmates, Josh, Juan, Lee, Kevin, and Kit. I am so happy to have been involved in some of your projects and see your voices in mine. Thank you for your friendship and making Logan feel less lonely—the snacks and flan made all the difference. Thank you, Ariel, for our countless cooking and eating sessions; I was deeply moved when you called me family. Thank you to GSCA, D., Gabe, Mary, Senyo, Jamal-Alexander, Li, Monika, Siddharth, Jazmin, Oscar, Aaron, Jenn, Kory, Chase, and José-Manuel for the gift of your friendship. Thank you Miriam, Amand, Niyonta, Andres, Shari, Caroline, Connor, and Jeein, for the opportunities to collaborate and work together. Whether we shared meals in my early or later years of the program, I remember our exchanges with great fondness.

Thank you to my dearest friends, Sophie, Michelle, Alice, Lynn, Jasmine, Elliott, Sarah, and Pris. Thank you for the memes, meals, and hearing me throughout the rollercoaster of graduate school. You are my first friends for shared tea—thank you for the different ways you have tended to my heart. Thank you to my partner, Christina, for all the ways you have sustained and nourished me throughout my degree. You are precious, and I treasure your cooking. Thank you to my darling sister, Hilly b—your presence is always felt, no matter our distance. Your rigidity with and love for food accompanies me in this work, as with all your care, in your cut fruit and homey broths. Thank you mostly, to my mother, my 咪媽, my mima, for inspiring this work. Nothing that I have learnt about care and knowledge has been without your trace and decades of labour and love. I hope this offering is pleasing to You.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

Numerous studies have explored how sexual and gender minorities of color navigate stigma, risk, stress, and health disparities, which have helped guide and clarify the need for culturally competent interventions. Enriching knowledge about the protective processes (Bonelli & Koenig, 2013) that multiply marginalized populations employ to navigate their hyphenated selves (Katsiaficas et al., 2011) will better contextualize the strategies and wisdoms that help individuals resist, survive, and thrive despite systemic oppression. One such location of resistance, sustainment, and nourishment is in food. This study explores everyday food practices as knowledge making and healing among Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) individuals who are 2-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (2SLGBTQ+), and spiritual/religious.

Everyday food practices involve planning, preparation, cooking, eating, and sharing behaviours, and reflect social roles and personal identity (e.g., preparing altars, using kosher or halal meals, transmitting family recipes, feasting and fasting with kin, cooking for queer lovers). Culturally, food practices are relevant to the ‘muddiness’ of hybridity as it might relate to multiple community memberships across sexual, ethnoracial, gender, and religious/spiritual identities. Food practices as embodied, located in everyday personal levels, also reflect broader sociopolitical movements of collective healing, cultural consciousness and connection, and community building. Different theories describe people’s relationships to food practices, and what they mean for cultural

identity (e.g., gender, racial, ethnic, spiritual, religious, and sexual), such as borderland theory in identity hybridity (Anzaldúa, 1987), HEART model in cultural healing (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019), and integrated identity development in contextualizing identity (Galliher et al., 2017). I posit that everyday food practices reflect individuals' hybrid knowledges about their identities and act as a source of comfort and connection, both of which are crucial for collective healing, decolonization, and liberation.

Vicissitudes of identity development among 2SLGBTQ+ BIPOC involve identity conflict and strategic identification across community memberships particularly around religious/spiritual and ethnoracial intersections (Boellstorff, 2005; Choi & Israel, 2016; Enno, 2022; Fisher, 2007; Garcia et al., 2008; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010; Page et al., 2022; Parmenter et al., 2021; Rosenkrantz, 2016; Yip, 2008). Indeed, disidentification (Muñoz, 1999), silence (Tam, 2018), and messiness (Manalansan, 2015) are some strategies of 2SLGBTQ+ people who reveal the “historically situated and materially conditioned” (Johnson, 2000, p. 127) realities of their identity configurations. Studies highlight the hybridity of identity among individuals who refuse dichotomizing worldviews or binaries and reject notions that their cultural backgrounds are ‘at odds’ with each other (Adams & Phillips, 2009; McGuire et al., 2017; Van den Brandt, 2018). Schachter (2004) pointed out numerous theorists who challenged the idea that an ‘integrated’ identity should be privileged as a marker of psychological maturity, as socially constructed constraints of personal sameness and continuity coerce individuals to choose within social dichotomies, which might not reflect their psychological and lived realities that are multifaceted, changing, and contradictory (Gergen, 1968). Choi and Israel (2016) similarly suggested that integration is less about the telos of wholeness or

maturity, or a “bad,” “good,” or “better” configuration (Hahm & Adkins, 2009); rather, identity configurations dynamically reveal the contexts and situational demands (Galliher et al., 2017) that differentially impact individuals’ experiences of self, connection, and belonging.

Other 2SLGBTQ+ BIPOC research has shown how individuals were empowered by their unique social location to navigate the complexities and positive aspects of their identities: two-spirit, lesbian and gay Native Americans recollected their identity development journey with pride, acceptance, and spiritual sanction (Adam & Phillips, 2007); sexual and gender minority refugees who fled from Middle East, North Africa, (MENA) and Asia shared drawing strength and solace from their faith and reclaiming Islam in their own way (Alessi et al., 2019); bisexual women and gender diverse people of colour strategically used their passing privileges to advocate for others (Ghabrial, 2019); transgender people of colour who survived traumatic events discussed their resilience, pride in their gender and racial identity, and cultivated hope for the future (Sing & McKleroy, 2011); Asian American lesbian or bisexual women engaged in social activism, resilience processes, and cultural values as a source of strength (Sung et al., 2015); bisexual/plurisexual and biracial/multiracial individuals shared their positive identity experiences of multiplicity, impact, and connection in having dual bi identities (Paz Galupo et al., 2019); and religious/spiritual LGBTQ+ BIPOC shared everyday positive identity strategies of presence and gratitude to cope with stress and suffering (Grace Wong et al., 2022).

These studies have demonstrated how 2SLGBTQ+ BIPOC have embraced their multiplicity, resulting in unique expressions, coping, and community supports. This

project captured how food practices elaborate on those identity constellations and configurations and are engaged as medicine and connection. This qualitative study is thus invested in foodways as means for individuals to explore, approach, change, and internalize labels, identities, and communities that feel congruent and meaningful to their worldviews, values, and upbringing, and elaborate on culturally-congruent interventions for individuals navigating identity conflict and community belonging.

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this review, I highlight different theoretical frameworks and empirical studies that elaborate on food practices as reflective of microidentity, hybrid knowledges, and a source of healing. I will engage integrated identity development (Galliher et al., 2017), borderland theory (Anzaldúa, 1987), and healing ethno-racial trauma (HEART) model (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). Through these theoretical approaches, I hope to illuminate how food practices are embodied in local, everyday routines that create knowledge and connection, and implicated in broader sociopolitical pathways that can move us towards collective healing and liberation.

Microidentity in Food and Accompanying Practices

Galliher et al.'s (2017) integrated developmental identity model is a multi-level, ecological (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and intersectional approach (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) to contextualize identity configurations (Erikson, 1968). This model situates identity within four levels: (a) *historical, cultural, and political contexts* that impact an individual's sense of power and simultaneous membership to groups of privilege and marginality; (b) *social roles* that represent an individual's relationship to others (e.g., spouse, parent, sibling); (c) interpersonal (e.g., occupation, romance, friendship) or ideological *content domains* (e.g., politics, religion, hobbies) that are idiosyncratic and significant to the individual; and (d) '*microidentity*,' or everyday thoughts, feelings, and actions that enact the above levels of an individual's socio historical-cultural contexts, social roles, and personal identity domains. Given how an individual's "culture, relations, and domains can be revealed through the microcontent" (Galliher et al., 2017, p. 2016), I

am interested in employing everyday thoughts, feelings, and behaviours around food as microcontent to illuminate participants' broader contexts and histories, social roles, and personal values and domains. For numerous communities, food-based rituals honour loved ones, ancestors, and a way of life, and can illuminate the relationships we have with our bodies, lovers, families, and communities.

Food in Queer and Sacred Intimacies

Lavis and colleagues (2015) theorized how the materialities of caring and eating are intertwined through and in bodies and their relationships to others. Eating and feeding becomes a way to make and remake the relationships between self and others. Boellstorff's (2005) ethnography on gay Muslims in Indonesia elaborated on how religious doctrine, interpretation, and community showed up through a state of incommensurability (Povinelli, 2001) between religion and sexuality. Boellstorff (2005) wrote, "gay lives exist and are lived every day; what exists is a habitation, not a resolution, of incommensurability" (p. 582). This habitation, or what he calls 'dubbing culture,' was beautifully exhibited in an anecdote about a slametan—a celebratory feast held in honour of a gay Indonesian Muslim man, among his boyfriend, friends, and chosen family. He described the physical space as holding several national and cultural symbols and trinkets, where people were invited to pray "each in their own way." The birthday honoree then served the very first plate of food to his boyfriend, they kissed each other's cheeks, and beckoned the rest of the guests to eat. The heart of this moment is a collision of cultural, national, familial, relational, religious, and interpersonal domains, that simply allowed for the microidentity configuration to exist *as is*. Boellstorff shared different approaches through which these gay Muslim men understood their identities,

and what was important is understanding that nothing is ‘undubbable,’ and everything finds a way to exist *as is* even in its incommensurability. This queer gathering is reflective of the embodiedness of care work in feeding and eating, and intentionality in making and remaking chosen family and queer joy.

Borderland Theory: Food Mestiza Consciousness

Anzaldúa (1987) proffered ‘Borderlands,’ a liminal third symbolic and social place of the marginalized and abject, to blur the synthetic impositions of political, economic, and national borders. She referred to a mestiza consciousness to embrace multiplicity, plurality, hybridity, tensions, and ambiguities against the purity of race, culture, nationality, gender, and sexuality. It is within borderlands that *la mezcla*, hybridity, pushes against dualistic and historically accepted binaries, generates new knowledges living in between worlds, and grounds intercultural transgressions as agency and vision (Anzaldúa, 1987). Borderland theory then is a useful tool to illuminate how food teaches us about borders, space making, and notions of authenticity (Garcia, 2018).

Troubling Authenticity and Developing New Pathways

Garcia (2018) used the phrase, “food mestiza consciousness,” to discuss the “tensions, contradictions, and problems that arise from liminal food practices” (p. 68). For example, she described how carne asada fries, which are not authentically or traditionally American, French, Belgian, or Mexican, came into being from San Diego. She further questions if carne asada fries are not authentic to any specific region, is it then “authentic to the border?” and “does it matter?” (p. 67). Lizzaraga and Bates (2023) interviewed two cookbook authors Von Diaz, a Puerto Rican journalist, and Reem Assil, a Syrian-Palestinian restaurant owner and former community organizer, who also contested these notions of authenticity and elaborated on how women of colour have

shaped the foods we love and eat. Reem Assil relayed that as long as the “soul of a dish...[its] spirit, [its] history” is intact, “everything else is flexible” (Lizzaraga & Bates, 2023, 18:20). In the exploration of what is deemed authentic, Von Diaz asked, “who is the authenticity for? Who needs for something to be called authentic Chinese food, authentic Puerto Rican food?...I eat the food and decide for myself whether...I [can] detect the soul of the dish” (Lizzaraga & Bates, 2023, 20:37). Concepts of purity and authenticity sometimes play into claims to culture and place. Von Diaz continued that her circumstances involved hybridized cultures, “Puerto Rico is a place that is African, Indigenous, Spanish, American and more,” and asked, “does my authenticity require all of those things to be represented in a dish, or is my authenticity more about the quality and the freshness of the sofrito that's used as the foundation for the beans, for the sauces, for the stews?” (Lizzaraga & Bates, 2023, 21:20). Adapting food practices is a response to material and social contexts of living, as well as the availability of ingredients, or lack thereof (Heldke, 2007). The notion of hybridity, or food fusion, muddies a person’s relationship to purity (Garcia, 2018). Von Diaz cemented this notion of food hybridity in how “food is alive. Cuisines are alive. If you don't adapt them...if you don't change the ingredients, then it's not living, right? It's not evolving” (Lizzaraga & Bates, 2023, 21:50).

Considering diasporic contexts, access to raw ingredients (e.g., spices, meats, vegetables) of a traditional recipe, would require adaptation because harvesting within a different landscape would yield different tastes to the meat, vegetable or spice per se. Garcia (2018) displayed flexibility with her ingredients and recipe in her story of making tamales with powdered masa, coconut oil, chicken, and Hatch brand red chile sauce:

“they are an interpretation of what I have eaten on the border, what my family has made (based on a loose family recipe from Sonora, Mexico)...these tamales are an interpretation of an interpretation, or a borderland of a borderland” (p. 68). Food mestiza consciousness illuminates the aliveness and liminality of food practices as a place for borders, hybridity, adaptation, and memory that problematize food purity and authenticity (Abarca, 2015). Its power appears particularly salient for people whose identities are about hybridity, tensions, ambiguity, fragmentation, contradiction, and multiplicity of social constructions.

Garcia (2018) argued that food can be used as a pedagogical tool to remap, reterritorialize, and decenter knowledge: remapping what is understood as ‘traditional’ food and tracing it to multiple points, reterritorializing a food’s regionality, and decentering the desire for authenticity (i.e., not limiting a food to a place such that a recipe can be adapted over and over). Liminality and incommensurability exist in the construction of food with “good-enoughs” (e.g., using local ingredients, interpreting another recipe, finding substitutes). In bringing untraditional knowledge or “home knowledge” (e.g., remembering, interpreting, and remaking food), we can engage critically with new knowledge that comes in food preparation, making, eating, and digesting. Garcia (2018) described how her friends and family gathered for *tamalada*, to assemble tamales, and how “making tamales is ultimately home knowledge” (p. 72). In this context, preparing food together is the grammar of making knowledge through the preparation of ingredients, assemblage of loved ones, discussion of techniques and family recipes, and celebration of storying, tradition, and culture.

Making food then, can also be making knowledge and making culture. Food is “learning” and “teaching” through food (Swan & Flowers, 2015). Food is both the “object of learning” and “vehicle for learning” (Flowers & Swan, 2012). Food pedagogies refer to “range of sites, processes, curricula, learners, and even types of human and non-human teachers and can create knowledge at an individual, family, group, or collective level (Flowers & Swan, 2012, p. 425) and also about “power, culture, bodies, gender, class, race, status, identity, pleasure, pain, labour, and health” (p. 423)—the “who and what we are.” Food teaches us not just about ourselves and our families, it can refer more broadly to the contexts of colonization and imperialism.

Food Sovereignty and “粒粒皆辛苦” Remembering the Farmers who Toil

Food can help us remember. In Sutton’s (2001) fieldwork in Kalymnos, he described how food memories constitute a “form of historical consciousness” (p. 26) and submitted “parallels between how food is remembered and how the past is remembered more generally” (p. 103). Food teaches us through how it is remembered. Liberation theory (Freire, 1972) articulated the centrality of critical consciousness through learning, knowledge, and education in the struggle towards liberation of the oppressed. He writes, “the oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption” (1972, p. 54). Even considering migrant labourers who pick our fruit and grains, Poet Li, shared 粒粒皆辛苦, each grain of rice carries the sweat and labour of farmers who till and toil. Food access elaborates on broader movements of migration and exploitation. Food appears in our “struggle for redemption” through food sovereignty, access to traditional and decolonized diets, and collective memory. Torres Rivera (2020) detailed liberation theory’s core principles around recovering historical memory and the importance of

people connecting to their past to understand pride, values, fears, and beliefs, as well as how people's histories, ancestors, and communities develop their "I-am-ness."

Despite 400 years of colonialism against Indigenous lifeways and foodways in North America, numerous First nations people are engaging in a cultural resurgence of re-learning and passing down knowledges via Indigenous cookbooks for traditional food knowledge and healing diet-related colonial trauma (Bodirsky & Johnson, 2008). The damage caused through different colonial institutions, such as reservations, the Indian Removal Act, and residential schools, have severely undermined traditional cultures and knowledge. Yet, food as pedagogy is seen in passing on traditional food knowledges, stories, and wisdom via cookbooks about wild game, soups, smoked foods, preserves, vegetables, and rice (Iserhoff, 1976; Lovesick Lake Native Women's Association, 1987; Watts & Watts, 2007). Indigenous food sovereignty refers to a "re-connection to land-based food and political systems" (Martens et al., 2016, p. 21), like accessing food, land, and information on individual, community, and tribal levels (Hoover, 2017). Indigenous farmers, gardeners, and educators relayed the importance of heritage seeds, procurement, hunting, gathering, and fishing to promote community health, and reclaim and maintain tribal culture (Hoover, 2017). Indigenous food sovereignty also refers to "sacred responsibilities to nurture relationships with our land, culture, spirituality, and future generations" (Morrison, 2011, p. 111). Roberto Nutlouis, who maintains fields of Navajo heritage corn with youth using traditional dry land farming methods, explained that "corn isn't just corn...it's a biological and spiritual nourishment to our people" (Hoover, 2017, p. 21). Presley (2021) discussed how the reclamation of foodways through traditional diets, harvesting methods, and consumption practices are connected to the "survival of

the spirit,” (Cajete, 2000, p. 131) reflecting intimate Indigenous kincentric relationships between people, land, plants, and animals.

Food sovereignty is linked to revitalizing traditional diets, cultivating historical memory, attending to the spiritual significance of food, creating access to land and agricultural methods, and advocating for self-determination. Colonial and imperial systems have also impacted other civilizations when it comes to cuisines and food systems, whether it was the Spanish forcing out maize in favour of wheat (Garcia, 2018), or the Japanese empire adopting Manchurian cuisines (Iwama, 2021; Pilcher, 1998). Migrant histories tell a story behind fusion cuisines (Iwama, 2021). Using Driskill’s (2010) double-weaving metaphor in bridging alliances between Native and queer studies, to strengthen our theories and practices, colonization and oppression are linked in our communal basket, and thus, our liberation is linked to indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. TribalCrit (Brayboy, 2005) relayed how storying is valuable in transmitting cultural knowledges, constituting theory where “our stories are our theories” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 426). Similarly, testimonio (Cervantes, 2020) and voice of colour (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), provide people of colour with a unique position to share memories, knowledges, and link theory to practice. Having some understanding of differential racialization and its impact on specific races “own origins and ever-evolving histor[ies]” enables us to understand our own “potentially conflicting, overlapping identities, loyalties, and allegiances” (Deigado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 11). Storying can be a powerful tool for individual and collective healing to cultivate survival and resistance—survivance—strategies (Vizenor, 1998). Food, through the stories of 2SLGBTQ+ BIPOC,

can provide a frame for articulating memories and knowledges, that help us better remember our histories and ancestors, to help us envision our paths forward.

HEART Framework for Healing Food Practices

Food practices can be seen as a part of collective healing, cultural consciousness and connection, and community building. Chavez-Dueñas and colleagues (2019) discussed a framework for healing, Healing Ethno And Racial Trauma (HEART), grounded in the principles of liberation psychology (Comas-Díaz & Rivera, 2020) and trauma-informed work (French et al., 2020), that consists of four phases to achieve growth, wellness, and healing: (a) develop sanctuary spaces; (b) reprocess, mourn, and cope with loss; (c) strengthen and connect individuals, families, and communities to survival strategies and healing cultural traditions; and (d) strategize, protect, liberate, resist, and organize for social action. Underlying the model is the idea that healing has to attend to both the individual's subjective experiences and symptoms, as well as how overlapping systems of oppression impact their presenting concerns (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). Further, by restoring an individual's sense of historical memory by "reconnecting, strengthening, or staying connected to their ethno-racial roots" (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019, p. 55), we can conceptualize problems and interventions within the social-historical context of the person, and provide courses of treatment that address both their self-determination and target institutions more broadly. Interventions then occur on community, family, and individual levels.

Everyday relationships with food and eating are interwoven into the texture of individual, social, and collective identities (Caplan, 1997; Fischler, 1988) and food provides a medium for social change. For example, an intervention, such as

concientización, critical consciousness, involves contextualizing ethno-racial distress that BIPOC populations may face in the racism, shadeism, nativism, and ethnocentrism within American white supremacy (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). On a community level, educational programs may involve a ‘pedagogy of the oppressed Other’ in learning about other oppressed groups and the differentiated impacts of white supremacy on food insecurity, decimation of cultural diets, and exploited migrant farmers. On a familial level, it might involve understanding the impact of ethno-racial traumas in a family unit and relabeling behaviours of assimilating to food, hiding or denigrating own foods, fusion foods as survival strategies within the context of oppression. On an individual level, it might be providing affirmation, validation, and support to relearn family or cultural recipes, mindfully enjoy food, and nourish others, while discussing the impact of systemic factors. In essence, HEART’s set of recommendations ensure ‘sanctuary’ in a holistic way and call for multi-level delivery as lived experiences of ethno-racial trauma are expressed across individual, family, and community. Through the HEART model, food practices can be imagined as a tool to strengthen individuals, families, and communities by using indigenous or cultural food knowledges, reprocessing histories associated with food, authentically expressing food preferences, and inviting others into sharing in the medicinal qualities of food.

Identity Expression, Interpersonal Connection, and Celebration

The HEART framework was initially conceptualized to address the ethnic and racial trauma experienced by Latine immigrants. Using food as a source of healing in the aftermath of trauma is about attending to the core experience of coping with oppression as 2SLGTBQ+ BIPOC, when dealing with cisheteropatriarchy and white supremacy. When feeling disconnection from communities, people are more vulnerable to the

impacts of oppression and isolation (Meyer, 2003). Taking a moment to eat, drink, or gather together can potentially create space for distressed individuals to talk through the pain of sadness, homesickness, or prepare to mobilize for protest. Using food to access smells, feelings, and memories is about not just coping with rejection, denigration, or violence, but also as a way of connecting to others. Liu's (2021) article illuminated the ways in which other racial and ethnic communities can draw on this model and highlight their rich histories, community connections, and cultural significance tied with food.

Liu (2021) interviewed numerous Asian chefs and celebrities about the role of food as a point of comfort and connection. Hamza Khan shared in Liu's article, "I wanted to see who I was and how I want to put that on a plate" (para. 51). Khan's reflections of living in both Pakistan and the US, were expressed in his own spin on croissants by bringing in pistachios. He also made a connection to seviyan, vermicelli and milk, as a home dish that was frequently made by his mother. Another food writer, Grace Young, shared how talking to her parents about food was an easier way to understand their past as they were "always very reluctant to talk about their past because they left China for a better life in America." Instead, Young asked about food and cooking, as it was "sort of an easy way for them to talk about their past and their memories that wasn't threatening" (p. 62). The stories of bok choy with shiitake mushrooms connected Young to other stories about her parents' connections to Chinatown in Manhattan, and her concerns about the elderly's safety amidst the pandemic and sharp rise of anti-Asian hate. Jo Koy, comedian and author of "Mixed Plate" shared how his mother's food has been an opportunity to "celebrate my culture, show people our food," and allowed for the "different ethnicities being represented on that plate individually. They're delicious. So

you put them all on the plate at the same time, and it's just that much more good" (para. 73). These three Asian chefs articulated the different ways food practices have been able to illustrate their connections to their racial-ethnic identity, reprocess intergenerational trauma that is less discussed in the family, and share their food practices broadly to enable other individuals to celebrate their ethnic identities. Food can be used to teach food histories; practices illustrate connections to their racial-ethnic identity, reprocess intergenerational trauma, reflect home knowledges, and act as comfort, self-expression, and connection. Food narratives can help us understand collective memories, social experiences, and tensions between generational cohorts (Nettleton & Uprichard, 2011).

Power is the expression of sovereignty (self-determination, self-government, self-identification, self-education), on individual and collective levels. Better understanding 2SLGBTQ+ BIPOC experiences of racial, gender- or sexuality-based traumas as related to their everyday experiences and connected to institutions, can lead to more effective collaboration and conceptualizations of interventions that bolster their sense of self-determination, and address systematic oppression. In taking a strength-based HEART approach, understanding people's virtues and values as related to feeding, eating, memory, teaching practices can extend their strategies and imaginaries to finding connection, wisdoms, and nourishment from food.

Summary

The study doubles as an intervention by providing opportunities for individuals to engage in culturally congruent food practices and explore their meanings. Utilizing the HEART framework, participants engaged in strength-based orientation to cultural traditions to ground their being and trace knowledges/identities that were guided by their

own goals and desires. Engaging in identity exploration (Erikson, 1963) can be meaningful to access fidelity more deeply to self, future, and belonging. Eating is an embodied practice of caring for the self and feeding locates the care in connection and nourishment; this everyday act reflects political, cultural, and social forces that elucidate people's identities to themselves. Framed through borderland theory (Anzaldúa, 1987), HEART model (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019), and integrated identity development (Galliher et al., 2017), everyday food practices reflect hybrid knowledges and act as a source of comfort and connection, both crucial for collective healing, decolonization, and liberation. Among spiritual/religious, 2SLGBTQ+ BIPOC, I am curious about what kinds of knowledges and relationships they have with their food: (a) What are their everyday food practices, routines, and rituals? (b) What components of their food practices involve knowledge making and healing? (c) How do these food practices connect to cultural identity (gender, racial, ethnic, spiritual, sexual)?

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

Design

I conducted a narrative analysis of participants' reflections of their food practices, and its relationship with their various identities. I drew out key experiences and meanings of the stories that people told us through their photos and narratives—photovoice—and these were triangulated with a semi-structured interview. Photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997) builds upon critical consciousness (Freire, 1982) and elevates participants' voices. Wang (1999) described five photovoice concepts: (a) images teach; (b) pictures can influence policy; (c) community members ought to participate in defining and creating images that shape policy; (d) the process requires policy makers and other influential people to serve as audience; and (e) photovoice emphasizes individual and community action. Photovoice and healing practice artefacts will be used to understand how food knowledges and identity experiences converge in the making and eating of food, and how that can bridge understanding for people's experiences. Participants creatively and collaboratively documented the complexities of living their everyday intersections through food, and revealed the underlying dynamics, processes, and socio-cultural and material contexts.

The recipes and photos were artefacts participants brought to the interview, which deepened our understanding of the process behind their relationships with food, and the connections with their identities. Having participants create their photovoice also functions to elevate their voices and highlight the transformative power of storytelling (Rollock & Gillborn, 2011). In participants' creative, collaborative, and transformative illustration of the nuances and complexities of living out their intersections, it invites

exploration of the underlying assumptions, processes, and material contexts that underlie the socio-cultural and political power dynamics and institutions behind the construction of more personal, everyday experiences of self through food. It looks at the “local” content of how people are making connections to their food.

Finally, in the semi-structured interview, I explored a more global, abstract conceptualization of participants’ food relationships by looking at their narrative history, as well as asking questions about what sitting at the intersections of religion/spirituality, queer and transness, and racialization means for them as it relates to food. With the prompt to do a photovoice ahead of the interview, participants had more time to reflect and synthesize the persons, spaces, and contexts, which highlight food preparation, purchasing groceries, selecting recipes, making food with others, cultural and religious significance and meaning, and trace histories with these recipes. Participants and I engaged in a ‘dialogic spiral,’ to understand each other in a manner that is rooted in consciousness raising and based in exchanges of care and dignity (Annamma, 2016), which prepared me for better analyzing the circumstances, actors, and actions involved in their narratives and meanings behind their food practices (Glesne, 2016).

Positionality

My research is guided by caring reflexivity—‘acting from the heart’ (Rallis & Rossman, 2010)—to honour participants in ways that are as process- and rapport-oriented as possible (Kovach, 2010). The participants and I co-produced data and co-authored stories to ease the power imbalance (Glesne, 2016). The cocreation of knowledge allows partners to invent new products (fusion recipes), interpretations (a new take on a traditional recipe passed from a caregiver), new procedures (utensils and equipment), and perhaps new ideas about complementary dishes, all of which can enrich participants’

food practices and provide new understanding of food in connection to themselves and across cultures.

Our positionalities can be both enriching and limiting; my collaborators' varying identity configurations, which align with the communities of interest and the study's purpose to varying degrees, provide insight where each other's gaps exist. My experiences as a 1.5-generation Chinese-Canadian, Anglican, lesbian, middle-class, educated, cisgender woman, has provided me different avenues to develop relationships with the communities of interest. I was particularly cognizant of themes of 'both/and' tensions, liminality, hybridity, and familial connections. My attention to bicultural positionalities and articulated tensions of straddling worlds, along with shared identities with some participants, impacted the depth to which I was able to draw out and engage some of the participants' stories.

My coding team involved Renee, my committee chair, Kevin and Lee, my lab colleagues, and Connor and Jeein, my undergraduate research assistants. Renee is a European American, able-bodied, highly educated, cisgender woman who does not claim a particular sexual identity label, but accrues all privilege associated with heterosexual status through participation in heterosexual marriage. She was raised in a Christian tradition, but currently identifies as agnostic. Kevin is a cisgender, Chinese and Cuban American man. Living within the United States of America, he is cognizant of and has personal experiences with the tensions of racism and heterosexism within a White-dominated heteronormative environment. His perspective informed how he understood themes of biculturality and oppressive experiences voiced from the participants. Lee is a transgender non-binary spiritual white person, who is sensitive to themes of corporality,

binary gender tensions, and identity creation within a void. This perspective allowed them to personally understand the gendered nuance existing between expression and identity. Lee does not have a personal understanding of the non-dominant racial experiences/oppression of BIPOC, thereby restricting their analysis. Connor is a white, cisgender, young adult male who does not conform to a specific sexual orientation. These identifiers helped foster his own identity development, and to interpret identity development of other individuals. Jeein is a heterosexual Korean cisgender woman, who was born and raised in Korea. She recognizes her both dominant and minority identities, and her limited contact with the U.S. society might have affected how she interpreted reflections.

Participants

Recruitment process

Human research participant review and approval was obtained from the Utah State University Institutional Review Board (IRB; protocol #13577). The Canadian Secretariat on Responsible Conduct of Research clarified over email that my research does not fall under the auspices of a Canadian institution, so a formal ethics review with the Institutional Review Board in the U.S. was the appropriate course of action. I was given the suggestion to reach out to a Canadian research ethics board (REB) for informal or formal advice on research, which led me to read relevant guidance on multijurisdictional research ethics in the Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2022).

Following IRB approval, an eligibility questionnaire was distributed through a snowball method from my social media groups. I shared the eligibility questionnaire on

LGBTQ+ forums and social media groups, LGBTQ+ affirming religious institutions, university networks, and health service and community centers across Canada and the United States, where interested individuals were directed to a Qualtrics survey that included a consent form, an explanation of the study, an outline of compensation (up to \$100 for the completion of the study; \$25 for each documentation, \$30 for the interview, and \$20 for results feedback), a demographic survey, and a link to an appointment management website (Calendly) to select a 30 minute onboarding session conducted over Zoom, as well as their interview times. Individuals who did not meet the inclusion criteria (identifying as LGBTQ+ and as an ethnic/racial minority) for the study had their information deleted. Participants who met the study inclusion criteria and wished to participate received a confirmation email and reminders for their onboarding session, two food practice sessions, and final interview time. Participants were provided the option to use a pseudonym, so they could choose how they wished to be quoted and credited.

Participant Selection

To address the limited data we have on people that practice non-Christian religions (e.g., Islam, Hinduism) and belong to diverse racial/ethnic groups (e.g., Asian, Latine, Indigenous), intentionally targeted groups less represented in prior work by heavily advertising in relevant community spaces. Fourteen participants were selected intentionally to provide a range of experiences across the intersections of spiritual, religious, ethnoracial, sexual, and gender identity. Given the flexibility of online data collection, the recruitment was open to participants from both the U.S. and Canada. The sample was mostly younger adults, and slightly more than half were highly educated, factors that may have shaped some of their developmental reflections, experiences, identities, and histories. I organized participants by demographic categories in Table 1.

Table 2 reflects each participant's identifications, as well as interview time and photos taken.

Table 1*Participant Sociodemographic Information*

Gender	Religion	Disability	Household Income
Women, 7	Christian, 5	No, 7	\$100k+, 2
Nonbinary, 4	Spiritual, 3	Yes, 4	\$75-99k, 4
Men, 3	Muslim, 2	Maybe, 3	\$50-74k, 3
	Buddhist, 2		\$25-49k, 2
Cisgender, 8	Hindu, 1	Mental Health, 3	\$10-24k, 2
Transgender, 6	Agnostic, 1	Hard of Hearing, 2	
		Developmental, 1	
		Vision Loss, 1	
Sexuality	Race (>100%)	Location	Education
Bisexual, Pansexual, 6	Asian, 7	USA, 8	Master's,
Gay, Lesbian, 4	Black, 4	Canada, 6	Professional, or
Queer, 4	Multiracial, 4		Doctoral Degree, 8
	Latine, 4		Bachelor's Degree, 3
	White, 1		High School, 3

Note. $N = 14$. Participants provided free-form responses, which were then organized to the above categories by the author. Participants were from US or Canada, and were 22-36 years old ($M=27.32$, $SD=4.57$).

Table 2
Participant Demographics and Characteristics

Name	Pronouns	Age	Gender Identity	Sexual Orientation	Racial and/or Ethnic Identity	Spirituality/Religion	Location	Education	Photos	Interview
Kayleen	she/her; they/them	24	Nonbinary; gender nonconforming	Queer	Asian/Vietnamese	Buddhist	USA	Master's, Professional, Doctorate Degree	11	57:15
Pearly	she/her	35	Transgender	Bi sexual	Caribbean	Christianity	Canada	Bachelor's Degree	0	31:25
Christene	she/her	26	Cis woman	Bisexual	Indian, South Asian	Catholic	Canada	Master's, Professional, Doctorate Degree	8	53:30
S.B.	he/him	24	Cis man	Bisexual	Indian	Hindu	USA	Master's, Professional, Doctorate Degree	9	57:01
Alice	she/her	24	Female	Lesbian	Black American	Christian	USA	High School	9	39:07
Tee	they/them		Agender, Transmasc	Bisexual	Thai American	Loosely Christian but deconstructing	USA	Master's, Professional, Doctorate Degree	10	48:26
Alexander Mateo	he/him	25	Male	Gay	Mostly African American, great grandfather is Latino	Christian	USA	Bachelor's Degree	11	42:05

Table 2*Participant Demographics and Characteristics*

Name	Pronouns	Age	Gender Identity	Sexual Orientation	Racial and/or Ethnic Identity	Spirituality/Religion	Location	Education	Photos	Interview
Liz B.	she/her	28	Cisgendered woman	Queer	Mexican & Peruvian / Latinx	Raised Catholic	USA	Master's, Professional, Doctorate Degree	8	39:03
Nadia	she/her	25	Nonbinary	Bisexual	North African/Sudanese	Muslim	USA	High School	6	27:55
Yi Shi	they/them	28	Non-Binary	Queer	Chinese	Buddhist	Canada	Bachelor's Degree	8	56:46
Mishie	she/her	29	Cisgender woman	Pansexual	East Asian, Chinese with Singaporean roots	Agnostic	Canada	Master's, Professional, Doctorate Degree	10	71:42
Laura Chavira	she/her	35	Female	Lesbian	Latina	I don't practice any religion but I try to build my own spiritual practices	Canada	Master's, Professional, Doctorate Degree	10	63:51
Zafiro Andrade-Romo	she/her	36	Woman with gender nonconforming expression	Lesbian	Mexican	Spirituality more in accordance with Indigenous way of seeing life	Canada	Master's, Professional, Doctorate Degree	7	45:37
Amadeo	he/him	22	Transgender male	Queer (m-spec & a-spec, queer polyamory)	Italian and Thai American with Chinese and Polish ancestry	Interested in pre-Christian and Pre-industrial practices	USA	High School	4	71:39

Procedure

Data Collection

First, participants used photovoice (Wang, 1999) to document two discrete moments of food practice across two weeks, each time taking 3-5 photos to document their choice of recipe, process, ingredients, preparation, cleaning, cooking, sharing, people, site, or feeling (photos ranged from 0 to 10, with an average of 8). They were sent two email reminders for documenting their food practices prior to their interview, which was scheduled about a month away from the onboarding session. In the semi-structured interview ranging from 27 to 113 minutes (average interview time of 50 minutes), participants were asked open and closed questions to elaborate on their photovoice as well as their selection of recipes. The semi-structured interview engaged those photos as artefacts to understand the participants' knowledges, conceptions, and narratives. I employed narrative analysis (Riessman, 2005) to inductively and deductively read for themes with my coding team.

In an on-boarding orientation session, I explained to the participants that they were tasked twice to find two different recipes for food preparation and eating, document part of the process with pictures, and then arrange for an interview to expand on their experience with food. I facilitated a discussion on what forms of reciprocity and commitments of 'acting from the heart' they would like to see beyond research-based monetary compensation. I invited them to engage in analysis, coding, and writing sessions as co-authors if they were interested; no participant expressed explicit interest in this. There was also an element of member-checking to ensure participants could add or change things we may have missed in our analysis, both in their interviews and photovoice. The data and conceptual analysis were richer with community input,

particularly from the storytellers themselves. This method aligns with participatory action research and Indigenous research methods (Peltier, 2018), and my personal ethics to ensure that participants have autonomy over their stories and are credited for intellectual contributions. This follows the morality of Care Theory (Rossman & Rallis, 2012) that deeply implicates us, researchers, in supporting our participants in our interdependence and intersubjectivity.

At the eight-month mark, I followed-up with participants with an email of results including a summary (2 pages), and asked them for feedback, specific to their stories. In transparency, I sent them the entirety of the drafted results section (80 pages), in case they choose to read other's stories. All 14 participants replied with member-checking and several offered minor corrections to their transcript, feedback about the study, life updates, additional photos, and the impact of the study on their food practices. While no participants opted to participate in coding or writing, one participant, Mishie, expressed interest in zine creation, for lay distribution. Kevin, Mishie, and I are thus current collaborators on this project, which involves a zine of healing practices with participants' photos, snippets and stories from the interviews (as permitted by participants), to later share with the community.

Analytic Method

Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, including notes of speech, laughter, stuttering, and other verbal/non-verbal forms of communication, which were then edited for flow. Each coding team member was assigned three to five participants to read individually with the proposed overarching three theories to help frame their analyses. Connor double-checked and edited the zoom transcriptions of the interviews for clarity and accuracy, and to add non-verbal information. I triple-checked these

transcriptions to fill in words or phrases that zoom or Connor could not transcribe. Given our involvement with transcriptions, Connor and I read all 14 participants' stories closely. Each participant thus had at least three to four coders independently analyze their data. In a 1.5 hour coding meeting, we offered our varied understandings of what themes arose for each participant, themes shared across all participants, and themes that were not addressed by the overarching three theories. I took more time to organize the themes and stories after the coding meeting and spent a few hours with Renee over 2-3 months to distill themes within the broader theories. I engaged the coding team and participants with the summary of results once Renee and I considered it more organized and condensed.

I engaged in self-reflexivity via field notes, a research journal, and wove my interpretations and stories into the results alongside participants. Given my interest in the meaning of food practices as pedagogy and healing, we gained insight through people discussing what and how they come to know about food, and its relationship to their identities, as well as what and how food serves as a source of comfort and connection. A narrative analytic approach is appropriate to develop greater insight into the stories of how food is engaged. Narrative analysis is dialogic—it engages both the researcher and the research participant. By exploring people's reflections of their knowledges about and relationships with food, we provided concrete examples that participants have used to discuss the “how” and “what” of food pedagogies, as well as food as intervention for collective and individual healing.

Narrative analysis served as the framework to inductively and deductively read for themes, to refine the thematic categories (including domains, perspective taking,

mixed emotions, meaning making, meta-cognitions), and continue the iterative process until we found consensus in our coding. We searched for meaning based on interactional analysis in narrative analysis, which emphasizes the dialogic process between teller and listener (Riessman, 2005). The interactivity allowed for knowledge construction and the interest laid in storytelling as a process of co-construction, where teller and listener created meaning collaboratively. Reflection and reflexivity involved infusing thoughtfulness into an individual's sense of meaning. Through iterative and interactive analysis of transcripts with five coders apart from myself, the stories that emerged through the interviews and dialoguing helped us explore, interpret, explain, and translate individual experiences, and conceptualize broader contextual factors, beliefs, and behaviours surrounding food practices.

Through narrative analysis, we observed narrative complexity, differentiation and integration of thought, multiple points of views, mixed motivation, attention to complex emotional experiences, and broad themes. Smith (1996) spoke to a 'double hermeneutic,' in which participants try to make sense of their experiences and researchers seek to make sense of their making sense. Five coders and I separately read and reread transcripts, flagging key statements, quotes, and contexts, and cluster for composite themes, while also documenting our perspectives and experiences in conducting the study (Glesne, 2016).

CHAPTER IV

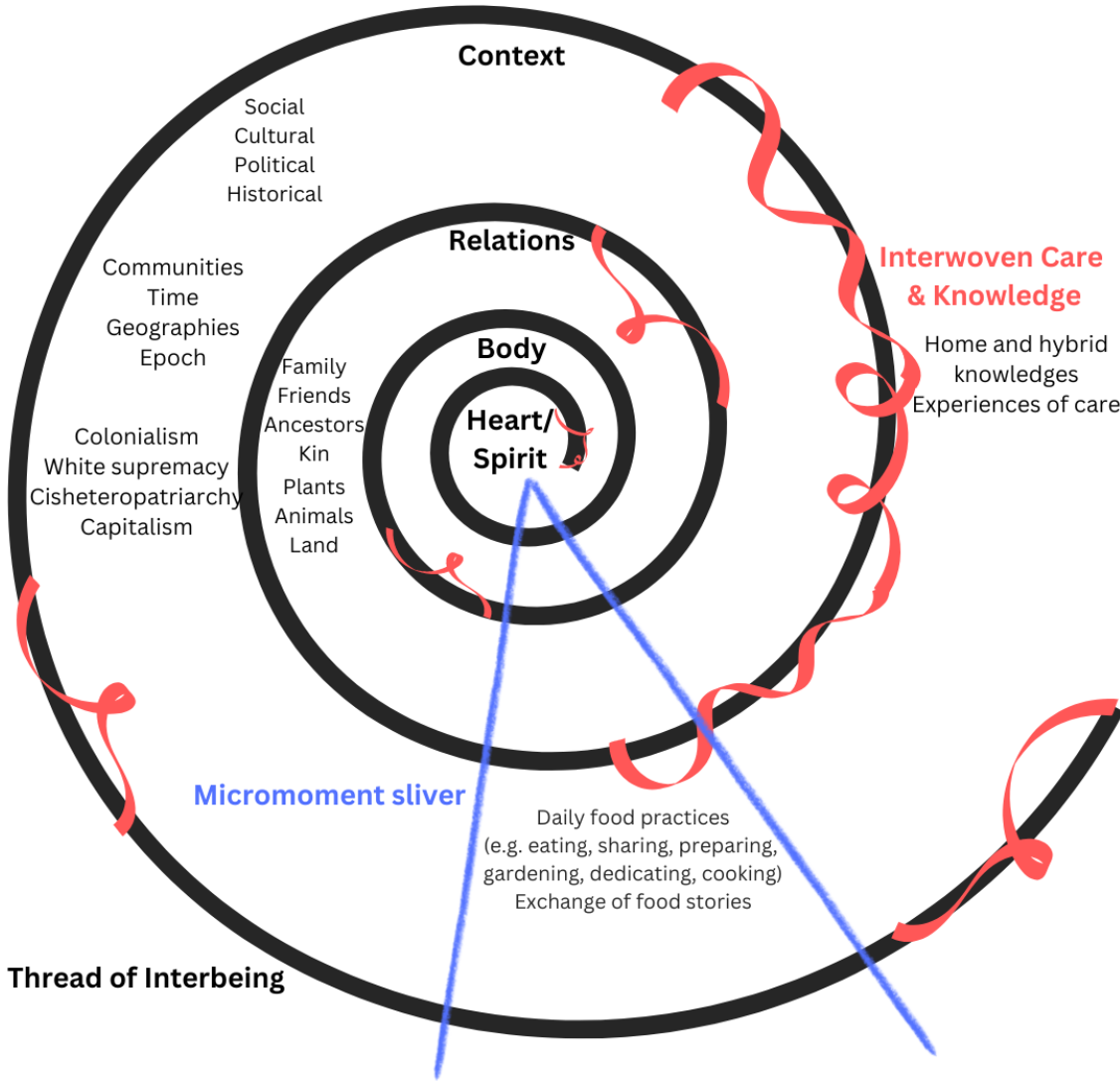
RESULTS

Three theoretical models informed the study: the Integrated Identity Model (Galliher et al., 2017), the HEART model (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019), and Borderlands theory (Anzaldúa, 1987). Each theory contributed to one of the three sections of results: 1) how micro-identity moments manifested in daily food and accompanying practices, and what they revealed about the participants, their social relationships, and their broader connections to culture; 2) how historical memory was cultivated within food stories told and retold, and how connection and care embedded in such practices help participants heal; and 3) how participants highlighted *la mezcla* within their own approaches to making new traditions and knowledges to forge new paths in their food *mestiza* consciousness (Garcia, 2018).

All themes overlapped in articulations of caring and knowledge making. I constructed Figure 1 to depict the thread of interbeing (later addressed in the Discussion) to show our interconnectedness and intersubjectivity across time, space, and relations. We carry a red interwoven rope of care and knowledge that contributes to our experiences of self and culture through our lived experiences, as well as the home and hybrid stories we carry. Finally, at any point along the thread, we cut across a “sliver of time” to reveal our identities formed through the micromoments—such as daily food practices and their accompanying food stories. A large component of this study is grounded in how healing appears in everyday moments, particularly within culturally-congruent food practices. Liberation theory involves the deideologization of our experiences, developing our sense of historical memory, and connecting people to their

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of Interwoven Nature of Care and Knowledge in the Formation of Our Interbeing



Note. This figure is marked by three distinct colours for the varied elements of integrated identity, how it is sustained through interwoven nature of care work and knowledge making, and its constitution within everyday moments.

past and present communities to understand how our being, struggles, and experiences are interconnected with each other. Everyday food practices are one avenue, as depicted in Figure 1, cut across time and space and relations to better understand how our values and visions are shaped by our relations, ancestors, and stories. Thus, the interwoven work of caring for each other and building on our home and hybrid knowledges within these practices constitute how we come to know our *being with* each other, in the broader picture of collective resistance and liberation.

Table 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 elucidate the varied themes that will be addressed with their respective theoretical models. For the first theme, Table 3.1, microidentity moments of care within daily food and accompanying practices revealed how care was central to sustaining themselves, others, and connections to their culture. Where participants offered their personal definitions of healing in the first theme, it encompassed a holistic approach to spiritual and soul-health that is connected to strengthening familial and cultural connections. Part of this practice is connected to cultivating historical memory within food stories, which are told and retold about survival, resilience, and repurposing, Table 3.2. With increased knowledges about systemic oppression through colonialism, capitalism, white supremacy, and cisheteropatriarchy, participants reflected on moving forward with their personalized and contextualized approaches to make new traditions and also pass on old ones, to forge new paths and meaning within their own approach to “la mezcla,” Table 3.3. Moved by participants offering their stories and reflections of their complex food histories and journeys, I too will provide my experiences and reactions alongside theirs.

Table 3.1

Summary of Themes: Microidentity Moments of Care

Superordinate Theme	Sub Themes
Microidentity Moments of Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Connections with Food <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Participants' Definitions of Healing and its Embodiment in Food <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Physical and Medical Approaches to Nutrition <i>"The vitamins make our system work better."</i>—Alexander ▪ Psychological Notions of Safety, Comfort, and Balance <i>"If I was a pot on fire, that drink makes me cool down."</i>—Laura ▪ Restriction and Balance <i>"Know your limits."</i>—Kayleen ▪ Spiritual Notions of Nurturing the Soul and Connecting to Ancestry/Community <i>"We need to restart and reboot."</i>—Nadia ○ Idiosyncrasies Expressed in Orientations to Food <i>"I can express it, my personality."</i>—Alice ○ Creativity and Aesthetic Inclinations in Food Preparation and Presentation <i>"I've always been an artist."</i>—Amadeo ○ Intentionality and Gratitude to Orient to Daily Food Practices <i>"Being intentional in a process of eating food and enjoying food."</i>—Yi • Social: Caring and Connection in Sharing and Receiving <i>"Food for me can journey back to my background."</i>—Pearlly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expressing Affect and Affection <i>"I feel like it's delicious, I show it on my face."</i>—Alice ○ Responding with Individualization: Care for Preferences, Needs, and Restrictions

“Can it be shared with others?”—Kayleen

- Tasting the Care Within the Food Itself
“You have to be precise about the time, care, and attention.”—SB
 - Connecting to the Sense of Togetherness, Home, and Family
“It’s reminding me of home...it brings people together.”—Kayleen
- Cultural Connections with Food
“There is some remembrance... to be attached to [what] you make.”—Alexander
 - Connecting to Cultural Values, such as Resourcefulness
“Embrace the traditions that make me who I am.”—SB
 - Celebrations and Marking Special Occasions
“It’s something that people should be excited about, waiting for the celebration.”—Zafiro

Microidentity Moments of Care

The participants’ food practices revealed significant ideological values and idiosyncrasies. On an individual level, they shared their varying definitions of healing, many of which touched upon both physical and salutary aspects, and psychological and spiritual approaches like notions of comfort, balance, reflection, and meaning making for a holistic posture to well-being. Further, participants revealed how their food preferences sometimes reflected their personality or sense of adventure, and their creativity and aesthetic inclinations. On a social level, participants’ experience of food was related to their experience of care and connection, frequently expressing, and experiencing affection, soothing, celebration, and restriction. A few participants reflected on a tense

journey of reorienting to food that involved rebalancing approaches as informed by their upbringing, how to deal with overindulgence, restriction, or food prescriptions laden with judgement and internalized racism and sizeism. Finally, participants also provided broad-level reflections of how they engage with food in cultural, historical, and political contexts, some of which are reflected in barriers and access difficulties to food preparation and consumption.

Personal Connections with Food

Participants' Definitions of Healing and its Embodiment in Food. There are varying emotional, psychological, spiritual, and physical understandings of wellness and healing. Participants reflected on attending to themselves and their bodies: how am I doing? How is my body feeling? What does my body need? How do I nourish myself with food and stories? Healing for these participants involve: nutrition, medicine, safety, connection to ancestors, soul-health, non-Western approaches, balance, "health doses," and sense of home.

Physical and Medical Approaches to Nutrition. For Nadia, healing is "the ability to recover and to gain strength" and it looked like attending to her physicality through food:

This is one of my go-to foods and one of my healing practices when I feel homesick and sometimes when I'm actually sick... It's not just about physical sickness, it's a way to remind me that I can overcome whatever it is because preparing it is kind of significant to me and easy.

Figure 2

Nadia's Noodle Soup



Note. Nadia shares a few photographs of her ingredients to make noodle soup, a “very spicy spicy” go-to-food, for when she is feeling homesick or physically sick.

Similarly, for Pearl, “food can be healing to me if it’s medicinal. To ensure you have all the nutrients to give you prescription of food to cure disease...to make free from injury, to be sound or healthy, or to be whole.” For Alexander Mateo, he believed, “Food is part of it. Because when we feel sick or we are in a serious or critical condition, there are some special things...eating. So healing is a process of moving from any condition to a good condition.” He expanded on how nutrition is one of his key considerations around food:

Food definitely makes me feel good, especially the ones I make by myself. When it comes to fruit juice, add a little bit of water apple, melon, and then pineapple, and then I blend everything. I cut them into sizes before blending them so that they can mix together and it tastes good. I find joy doing all this...I like eating fruit and preparing fruit juice because I feel like it's a supplement, and then it improves the texture of my skin and then works perfectly in my body...the vitamins make our system work better. It's a lot of significance—nutrients and supplements.

Figure 3

Alexander's Fruit Juice



Note. Alexander blends a variety of fruits for his fruit juice. This recipe includes pineapple, watermelon, apple, and water.

Mishie shared a Chinese medicinal chicken essence drink, one that was made by her mother and one that was purchased:

This one is a container of what I would call ‘chicken essence.’ Mom is explaining to me that there was no water added to this entire thing. All of this essence came from just steaming the chicken... Whenever I go see her, she makes this for me because she's always worried about me, worried about my physical and mental health, my dad's always worried about my mental health. She's like, ‘you know, this is gonna nourish your body. It's gonna bring some blood circulation back to your body.’

She also buys me these chicken essence ones like the 白蘭氏雞精 [bak lan see gai zing; Brands chicken essence]. We just have them here because we drink them. They're supposedly good for your brain and focus. So, I drink quite a bit of chicken essence to keep my body going... That is her preparing a container of nourishment, and giving it to me at the end of each of our meets.

Figure 4*Mishie's Mother Prepared Chicken Essence*

Note. Mishie shared that her mother made this chicken essence fresh, and to get rid of the oil first before drinking it.

It has been about 20 years since I have seen somebody talk about drinking Brands chicken essence. I recall this being part of my household when I was living in Hong Kong—it has a slightly bitter, savoury, chicken taste. My mother did not enjoy the drink, but I remember my grandmother occasionally purchasing it for us to better our concentration or general immune system; it is commonly bought before exams or for burning the midnight oil. Mishie's photo of her mother making the chicken essence was lovely to harken back to a common expression of care I had not seen in decades, and to see her parents' concern for her physical and mental health. Parental offers of something

healing for their children might not always be received in the ways that they meant, and it is heartening when the common language of care can be understood “as is.”

Psychological Notions of Safety and Comfort. Participants also described psychologically- and emotionally-connected notions of healing through happiness, comfort, connection, relief, and safety. For some, healing also involved confrontation and reflection to move forward in life and develop a balanced approach to wellness.

Alice talked about food being a source of happiness, especially when she was in a difficult space. Whether it is about nourishing happiness for herself during a difficult period, or sharing it with somebody who can demonstrate appreciation, Alice derived happiness from food and in the sharing of it with others:

What I find... sometimes when it's very difficult space...I want to feel happy...I am someone that when I cook, and I love it when people compliment my food, I feel happy when they say it's delicious. Most times, I say I want to cook this food...[I want to hear] 'this food is good'... makes me happy sometimes.

Figure 5

Alice Made Pizza



Note. Alice shared that while this is not one of her favourite foods, it is something she enjoys making.

SB shared what enjoying food can look like by himself and his experience of food as refuge. SB's experience of consolation and revitalization comes through cooking itself, deriving physical and mental satisfaction in mindful eating, and noticing his feelings and thoughts. SB conceptualized this balance of attuning to himself with food against his social interactions to manage his social energy and personal comfort. Even as an outgoing social person, cooking allowed him to recharge in his solitude, and find retreat and comfort to enhance his overall well-being:

Whenever I'm having a bad day, if I'm on my own, if I cook something for myself and then eat it, it's something which relaxes me even if nobody's there...I'll be in a happy little space of my own with my food. I don't have to interact with anyone else. I'm a very social and outgoing person, but sometimes my social battery kind of discharges, it kind of goes away. When I want to enjoy my own company, I just kind of prefer having food with myself, and then my thoughts... So, I think it gives me a safe space where I can think, and then if it's good, that dopamine releases. I like that happy feeling of when you're hungry and have food in mouth.

Tee added that healing and wellness are both psychological and physical:

It's more psychological wellness and physical wellness. I used to focus so much on a diet and stuff. I don't eat the same thing every week, but I trust the variety will give me the nutrients. For the wellness part of it, I think more of it like, 'What do I need this week?' If it's gonna be a hard week of work ahead. If so, then I'll make something more low-key so I have more energy this week. Or, maybe I'll make myself something special, like I'll pack myself a little dessert at work so I could smile a little bit after I [eat] lunch, or share it with my co-workers. I think about it more in that term, or what food might make me feel excited for the upcoming week, or maybe it might be a little bit hard psychologically. So, maybe I'll make some comfort food, chicken noodle soup. So, I guess it's not just eating aspect, but it's also the creating aspect of food.

The comfort that Tee craves can be in caring for themselves, honoring their energy levels and work commitments, and anticipating excitement and joy through desserts or whatever creation they land on. Their practicality informs how to serve their body with care, and their faith in their bodily knowledge and habits lend themselves to feeling freer about what they eat. Tee's food practice, like Alice and SB, involves caring for self and for others, and enjoying food as much as creating it. Tee continued to emphasize self-care in their approach:

Let's say I'm having a really hard time, sometimes I'll make myself something extra. There was one time I tried to make shrimp tempura from scratch, and it was really good, but it was really hard, and that's the only time I ever made it, cause I'm never gonna do that again. But it helped me to feel, 'Oh, I care enough for myself to do this much work for myself.' Believing in myself almost that I can do it because I put this much work into it.

For Laura, healing involved connecting to her inner-self and finding connection, relief, and comfort. She shared that healing involves:

Finding comfort in the discomfort. When the world gets difficult, healing is finding comfort despite that environment, finding an oasis in a complex or difficult world where it's like a relief. An inner connection, I would say

that's an important part of healing. My inner-self connects and feels connected. I think those three: connection, relief, comfort.

In terms of relief, when I have a very, very difficult day, very stressful, or I am very sad, I prepare myself a drink called paloma, which is like tequila, grapefruit soda, and ice. And, I feel that's like a relief...If I was a pot on fire, that drink makes me cool down...When I feel like there's something stuck in my throat, and I just cannot express my feelings or what is going on. That happens maybe once a month.

Similar to SB's mindful eating, Laura engaged her physical and emotional senses and memory in her food practices, and how paloma helped her experience relief and connection to her inner-self. Evident throughout Laura's interview was her keen attention to where things were from and how she sourced ingredients, 'How and where are we connected?' Her discussion of sourcing was linked her desire to connect to home and experience comfort. Laura narrated:

We brought the tequila from Mexico, Tequila Ocho. On the right side, there's a Mexican grapefruit soda that we bought at a Mexican store here in Toronto...It's so comforting when I open the bottle of tequila and smell it...it brings me home. Something in me connects and makes me feel that everything is going to be alright. When I drink it, it's like, 'Ohhh.' Everything starts cooling down. I am at peace and I can think better now.

Figure 6

Laura's Simplified Paloma



Note. Laura shared that the original paloma has lime and salt, with one-third or one-half of a shot of tequila.

Zafiro talked about comfort as well, particularly through pozole or miso soup:

If I'm having a hard day, and I just need some comfort, I can take a bowl of pozole, which is like a Mexican broth, or I can have miso soup. It can feel really comforting for the heart. I think that's also part of my history, cause I've been, besides Mexican culture, Japanese culture is my other culture that I grew up with, and it's also part of my comfort food, but also, if I'm having a really beautiful day, for example, my birthday, which is coming up in 2 days, I really want to share food with people to make it more special, because for me, it's about the sharing, and it's about being together at the table, maybe recreating this part of being with my family. I think that food can also make things even better than they are.

Zafiro drew on comforting broths or soups that were connected to her history, also emphasizing how food is connected to sharing with family.

Restriction and Balance. Zafiro continued, noting that healing has to do with balance:

finding balance in the things that were unbalanced...my topic for my Ph.D is well-being, and I'm constantly, constantly thinking about well-being and what it means to people, and what it means to me. Right now, we were speaking—and I was telling you how I feel that food brings balance. I think it's the first time that I said that out loud—that food helps me to bring balance, and that, by itself, is a type of well-being for me.

In this vein of balance, Tee shared their approach to food that is balanced and focused on understand food without the imposition of hierarchies:

I don't think any food is inherently superior or inferior to other food. I think food is for nutrition, for nourishment, for enjoyment as well. A lot of the time, food might be healthy, but if you're not enjoying it, then it's not really better for you than, let's say, a hamburger from McDonald's.

Tee continued contesting the notion of 'good' or 'bad' foods by contextualizing their experience of omelets and how their approach to eggs has been part of their longer journey of healing in making meaning, integration, and moving forward. They divulged:

Healing for me is recovering, but not necessarily ending up where we started. It's making sense of what happened or integrating what happened into part of yourself in a way that you can understand and accept it and find a way to use that knowledge to move forward....The integration in moving forward...

There was a period of time where my parents would not eat breakfast. I thought it was my responsibility, so I would cook a lot of omelets. That was my thing back then. For the longest time, I couldn't eat omelet. From high school, through college, until two or three years ago. I would get really bad stomach pain after omelet. But it was just so weird because I don't have an egg allergy, I can eat eggs in other forms, and I could eat every other ingredient in other forms. Just not omelet.

I had tried—therapy helped a lot, and trying to slowly test the water a little bit, I can eat scrambled eggs, but maybe if I add another cheese, maybe if I add a little bit of veggies or something. I still get stomach pain with omelet. I can eat it now, if I plan, stuff like that.

It's just a way of like acknowledging the past. I have difficulty sometimes with this. Basically it's a symbol, a representation of that, a reminder. But also making peace with it, just saying that it happened. I still might have a hard time with it. But you know I can move forward easier, and I can make this a part of my life again.

Tee's example of a McDonald's hamburger as important for enjoyment, is connected to their ways of disentangling how particular foods may be troubling to eat and enjoy. Their work has involved acknowledging the past, making peace, and gently incorporating material reminder of a difficult period, so they could re-engage with eggs in a way that was healing for them. At the eight-month follow-up, Tee was reminded of "how far I've come with this," sharing that their egg journey had progressed, "I am happy to report that I can enjoy omelettes again :)."

Tee echoed that food carried a history in their body, and they have had stress responses to that history (with eggs). Tee also remarked that while food is soothing, when they are stressed, it can be much harder to access food as a soothing thing. Tee also shared the laden histories of restriction that was taught by their family in order to manage their health conditions. Tee narrated:

I'm thinking more about like cooking, and my view of food and of cooking has evolved and its role in my life because growing up, my parents didn't really cook enough, so I taught myself to cook a lot of the things that I did. A lot of the time if I didn't cook for myself, I wouldn't have breakfast because my parents wouldn't be up until hours later, so I would teach myself how to make like an omelet, or fried rice for breakfast, stuff like that because it was survival. I didn't necessarily have a passion for cooking, it was just something that came along if I needed to have something to eat before school.

When I was moving out, or in between that, food evolved because my parents started cooking more. They went out on such a huge health kick when I was in middle school, and partly because they had to experience other things in their lives, I think for them, food was a way to control the anxiety and stress that they were experiencing, so they were really obsessed with health food. I kind of understood, but at the same time, we

ate junk food all the time to, 'Oh, now we're gonna eat green smoothies three times a day. We're gonna count calories. We're gonna count the macro. We're gonna do all of that.' It was unwelcome for me, cause on one hand, I was like, 'Well, you never paid attention to what we eat before, why now?'

Also, it was a way for them to try to shape me to be who they wanted me to be. Not just body shape because they wanted me to be skinnier, but also I have PCOS, polycystic ovary syndrome, and for them, I think they were trying to cure me of it using food. I only knew a few years ago that it wasn't really something that you can be cured of. But they were trying to use food to fix me, basically. A lot of food, I thought, taking on a bit of baggage like, 'I'm not gonna eat this certain food because my parents try to force it on me.'

When I went to college it was a lot more free because coming from high school, where my mom would literally say, 'This is what you can eat for breakfast, lunch, dinner,' to college and you have the buffet and the dining hall. I actually hated it because the food was not good. So, I cooked, and that was when I started to cook a lot more for myself and thinking about what food I wanted to eat. That started a more positive relationship between food and cooking, and that continues to this day.

Tee's history showcases restriction based in nutritional approaches, as well as body shaming. In an evolving narrative about how to present food and the right/wrong ways to share and demonstrate love, they discussed the complexities with navigating singular approaches to food to develop an approach that felt more attuned to their needs,

Some foods are forbidden, like sugar. You're not supposed to eat too much sugar. There are some foods that are good, some foods that are bad. You don't think about food too much, that's what I've been told too. If you think about food too much, then you're kind of wrong, or you're a weak person...

When I was growing up, food was more of a means of showing love. I think that was my first exposure. But also there's a right way to do food, and a wrong way to do food. This was probably maybe just the aunties that I interacted with more specifically who believed that...I think from my friends, I talked previously about sensory issues, and from them that there's no right or wrong way to do food.

I used to think that if you can't eat this and this food, not like a bad person but I would look down on you, or I'm thinking badly of you. Having those

friends really taught me to change that. Thinking about if we all push through in a different way, you have different histories. We all have different likes and dislikes, and that's totally fine.

Alice spoke about her comfort and journey to enjoying food, and the ways in which judgements can show up for her as somebody who enjoys food:

Being able to choose what I want. When I eat food, I feel happy; I love eating! I feel like some people are afraid to eat, and I want without any discomfort. I think it's good for me...I'm someone that is very chubby...When people see me, they feel like I eat too much. They kind of discriminate. They shame that I eat too much, and that I'm so fat. So, that is people for you, even if you are kind of slim, they complain, 'Oh, she doesn't eat.'

In a similar fashion, Liz B. discussed her own experiences with healing in her relationship with food. She shared the tensions of finding a balance between overindulgence and overrestriction, with, "not restricting yourself, letting yourself live and indulge, and not feeling guilty about food, but then also having a balance where you're not overdoing it. Just take care of yourself physically. I think the not indulging part is important mentally, balancing both of those." Liz continued:

[My husband's] family, I learned very much about the indulgence part—they eat whatever they want. They don't believe in leftovers because they want food that's fresh versus me growing up, we didn't have that much to eat, and whatever we would make, my mom would make in batches. I grew up in a very restrictive household in general, especially with food. If I look back on my childhood, I never got to eat stuff that I wanted to eat. It was just whatever was there. In terms of portions, I couldn't have too much, I was given a certain amount. If I was still hungry, that sucked.

I laugh about it now cause it's funny, but back then, it was very confusing for me. We would go to a restaurant and she would be like, 'Okay, eat everything you want, because we're never coming back here again.' But then we always came back, and it was always a sense of desperation in those moments. Where we're at the restaurant, I'm like, 'Oh my God, I'm never gonna eat [here again],' whatever meal it was. Usually, a Chinese buffet, so there were unlimited amounts of food, or there was a good sushi place we would go to as well. So, I'd be stuffing my face, because I felt like I had to savor it now, cause it's never gonna come again. But then we

would go back a couple of months later, and she would say the same thing. So, it was confusing—this weird situation with restriction, and then indulging, but under very specific circumstances...

I used to be very restrictive and very indulgent. Then, kind of a good balance, but then, tending towards restrictive. And now, I feel like I'm at a place where I'm at a good balance of tending towards indulgence, just the flip-flopping of it...hopefully have it be more in the middle more constantly, even though I know, obviously, that stuff fluctuates...I'll look at my husband, who has no problems with any food. And I think about how I grew up and why I have these 'food things,' and then I get down on myself about that. But, it's ok, I'm working with what I got, and it's such a long journey.

Liz's experiences of restriction and indulgence growing up in a food precarious environment impacted how she related to food presently. While she shared that she has found more balance in her approach to food, she disclosed that her attitudes were sometimes hard to shake off. The journey with eating behaviours can be a long one, given how our food practices are embedded in our family's practices, contexts, and values. Liz and Tee's reflections reminded me that shaking off disordered eating behaviours can be difficult, layered, and tense, particularly when food has been used as a form of control or taken on moral value. I am reminded in their sharing that for me, it has taken a while to arrive at eating happily, eating 'well,' and eating freely.

Mishie remarked that her food intake can be restricted with upcoming dancing gigs because of the pressures of her agency and the club to be within a certain weight range. Mishie shared about food intake mindfulness:

I love food but there are times that I do have to watch my intake, what I choose to eat for certain reasons. I wouldn't totally classify that as unhealthy, or even an eating disorder, there are just ebbs and flows in my life that demand different things for different parts of my life. I have like digestive stomach conditions since I was 15 doesn't stop me from eating food, though some things I eat but I'm not supposed to eat, but I have medication for that. There are times when my diet needs to change. I wouldn't even say I'm going on a diet because it really just ebbs and flows,

depending on what my body's like or what [my] bodily needs are at that time.

Laura appeared to resonate with this tension of indulgence and reflected on her own experiences of comfort through sweets, and restriction as a way to bring balance to her approach. She revealed:

I experience the opposite of health with food as well because I have a sweet tooth, and sometimes I just can't control myself. If we have a box of donuts at home, it's very likely that I will finish them in 24 hours. It's about restraining myself because the way I see health—I'm going to say a quote from Paracelsus, a person in pharmacology, 'the dose makes the poison.' Even water can be poisonous, depending on the dose, like 10 liters of water in a day can be poisonous. I think that applies a lot to food. When I'm eating healthy doses of food, I feel great, but there are sometimes when I go through a lot of stress, and I find immediate, short-lived pleasure or relief. I eat treats, that's usually what I abuse, sweet treats. Chocolates. So, I think it's all about the dose and food reminds me of that a lot.

As Laura reflected on how restriction helped her find balance, she also excitedly shared about a box of donuts that felt rewarding for her:

We went to Hamilton...on Saturday with a friend to a hiking trail, and after walking for 12 kilometers, we needed our reward. So, I picked the donuts to represent all these sweet treats. They are an individual food practice even when I was part of a group I make sure to enjoy my donut. Sometimes, I like to share. Others, I don't like to share with them.

Figure 7

Laura's Box of Donuts



Note. Laura noted her favourite donuts were the strawberry and the smores. She noted having a sweet tooth, loving cookies and “almost any kind of dessert.”

In her follow-up, Laura provided further reflections about cultivating balance, enjoyment, and health, while considering her family:

Zafiro and I spent about 6 weeks in Mexico early this year, and I focused on enjoying food as much as I could. But that came with a price; I gained 6 pounds, so now I'm trying to eat more balanced and lose the extra pounds so that my clothes fit, and my health indicators are better. The other reason for eating more balanced is that Zafiro is pregnant, and we are trying to cultivate healthy eating habits in our growing family 😊.

Laura and Kayleen reflected about ‘healthy doses’ as eating things in moderation.

For Kayleen, they shared how their spiritual values and cultural contexts impacted their approach to moderation:

I lived in a very predominant white, LDS community where they don't drink a lot of soda or coffee, so I don't drink a lot of coffee or soda. Drinking alcohol, in Buddhism, or what my grandfather teaches me is that you drink in moderation. You don't drink to get wasted and be incoherent, and not be able to think or do what you need to do or be appropriate, so

know your limits. Those are kind of like things that I've learned through food and how that has created my own identity and developed me as a person.

Yi Shi similarly talked about restriction because of their health concerns and spice tolerance levels. For Yi, they shared:

I express myself through food by having the identity of not being able to consume any level of spice...I also have IBS and lactose intolerance. It comes to a point where my partner, whenever she sees [me try] something she'll say, 'are you sure you're not gonna get IBS from this?' She says it in a way that kind of alarms the people surrounding me when it comes to eating together.

Yi's experiences of restrictions were also tied to their occupational constraints and unstructured eating schedule:

[On] one side I work odd hours, so I don't really care about eating much, and the other side, I will be a really good domestic person, care about ingredients and cooking techniques, and actually take time to cook or feed my friends. I would say in terms of my eating habits, it highlights either the good side of me, or the bad side of me.

But for the good side, I don't know, just cooking to me represents a form of care. Lately, the phrase 'white people food' [is trending] in China. That to me is not food. That to me is bad eating. To me, food has to be very carefully prepared with love and passion, or even on a very sluggish day, it still has to be cooked, even just with scraps from the fridge, but it's cooked with innovation and care.

As Yi Shi reflected on the sterility of 'white people food,' like broccoli with chicken, they appreciated food particularly when it is cooked with care. Yi's experience of 'good eating' is connected to feeling the effort that person put into cooking from picking fresh ingredients, use of technique, and putting time and passion into this labour. Yi Shi continued:

Well, sometimes I don't realize how important it is to eat food. Sometimes, for example, I work through a few hours without actually eating. I realize, 'Huh, my body hates this.' For the first two hours, I sit down and stand up and my eyes just go black for however long, until I finally took the first

bite of food. I realize how much my body actually needs this. So definitely physically it makes me feel better. Mentally, too, I think, as long as it's not a very long and unsuccessful meal prep session, my mood just gets lifted because I did something valuable for myself today. Also, there's a huge sense of accomplishment when you actually cook something—it's nice.

To Yi, 'having quality time' is an important factor of healing and 'eating time' is also included in quality time. In other words, not only is well-prepared food significant, but also the time to thoroughly savor the food is part of treating oneself well. Food preparing not just 'finishing one meal'; rather, food/food preparing is more spiritual and caring event for oneself and for loved ones—treating oneself in a good way. This is also echoed in Tee's reflections about food in relation to self-care.

Pressures to conform to thinness, food insecurity, or time sensitivities because of caregivers' jobs all affected the kinds of restrictive practices that came out in people's daily experiences with food. As participants reflected on the various circumstances that have led them to food restriction, I think about the conflicting messages I have received from my aunties, continually insisting in childhood on both eating not enough and eating too much, and not understanding how to strike the correct balance. I think about my own experiences with bingeing and purging during a period of increased stress, and how I was unable to access food through joy, but only through the framework of reward and punishment. Tee's courage in engaging with eggs multiple times was moving for me to read, and Liz B.'s reflection on food being a long journey was resonant. Like Mishie's reflection, there is an ebb and flow to diets, but as Tee shared, our situations contextualize the decisions we make about how we can orient to food in a more intentional manner.

Spiritual Nurturance of the Soul, Ancestry, and Community. Participants spoke about the spiritual quality of engaging with food important for the soul and sense of connectedness with culture. Healing for most participants took on a holistic quality that involved moments of reflection. For Christene, cultural food has a healing quality that nourishes her soul, “reconnecting with my food is actually realizing it is so healthy for the soul because I feel truly the best after eating, not just Indian food, but Indian food that's homemade by someone, specifically my mom, because that is so soothing.” In a similar way, Nadia reflected on the spiritual quality of food, “I believe that food brings healing. It could be physical, it could be more spiritual. But I believe that there's more to food than the satisfaction that is derived after consuming it.”

Christene continued to elaborate on ways to cleanse the self through a spiritual ceremony involving chilis:

There's this idea in a lot of South Asian and Middle Eastern cultures of the ‘evil eye.’ In more Middle Eastern cultures, it's called ‘Nazar.’ In my culture, it's called ‘Disht.’ Talking about this with my mom, there is this idea of energetically good vibes and bad vibes. When people are sending bad vibes your way...this is the healing ritual of cleansing yourself or protecting your energy...You burn chilis, you do this ritual to cleanse yourself of these bad energies that people may be sending your way and thinking about how food is the medium for so many of these things.

For healing, more of a physical sense and more of this energetic spiritual sense. Food in a lot of our practices are also related to religious practices. There's so many ways that food is connected to healing in all senses, definitely in the physical sense, but also in that more spiritual, mental sense as well.

Figure 8

Christene Shares 'Evil Eye' Cleansing Rituals

Evil eye cleansing rituals

Two options that need to be paired with prayer and intentional cleansing thoughts:

Info passed on from a community elder:

Burn the blessed palm cross (from church on Palm Sunday) and I add blessed oil to it (also acquired from church or another holy site). Say the 'I Believe' prayer and put crosses over various places on the body (head, feet and hands) until prayer is over.

Info passed on from maternal grandmother:

Take a chilli and salt, burn them together and mix it with spit. Pray for the evil wishes to disappear and for protection.

Note. Christene offers two rituals from a community elder and her maternal grandmother on how to cleanse self from 'Disht,' 'Nazar,' or the 'Evil Eye.'

For Kayleen, healing involved reflecting, observing, and confronting places of concern, “part of healing is being able to calm your mind and soul. How you can do that is being able to reflect, observe, and confront...recognize and reflect on everything and build up your own self.” For Yi Shi, they similarly note the importance of time to sit down and exist, “when I feel healed or on the right track, it's when I can actually sit down and calm myself down without thinking about too many things. This could also include negative thoughts, perpetuating thoughts. Healing is when I can actually have time to sit down and just exist.” Nadia also spoke about recalling, “even if I do not have the time to do [food preparations] regularly, it's a way to rearrange myself and recollect all I've gone through during the week or during the last two weeks. Whenever it's the arrangement of the ingredients for the food, it's a way for me to recall, and recollect.” Nadia shared a photo of where she enjoyed meditating to do some of this recollection:

This is my favourite garden/restaurant. It's my favourite place to go when I need to get away from the noise of this world and when I need to meditate. It's a really quiet [and] peaceful.

Because even if it's a restaurant, it gives me the solitude and the peace and quiet...It's quite far from where I stay, so I do not have the luxury to go there every day...I felt like, 'Yes, this was the place for me'... I like their drinks and their desserts...they have this cake that I really like, and I do not know the recipes. So, it's just basically desserts. Because when you're meditating, you do not want to have a full stomach, you want to relax and enjoy the scenery and take it in.

I feel like humans are like computers. We need to restart and reboot. So, I've learned that meditation is a way to restart, recall the recollect and think of things that maybe happened over time... It necessarily does not have to be in your room or in your house. It just has to be somewhere you find peace and solitude. I feel like people could learn more because everyone that's meditating is either doing it in their house or some kind of place, so I feel like you could meditate anywhere.

Figure 9

Nadia's Favourite Garden/Restaurant



Note. Nadia shares her favourite spot to break away from her environment and meditate.

Amadeo furthered the way that food was healing in creative and spiritual engagement:

The art and the craft that goes into cooking is meaningful to me. There's something satisfying about being able to go through the motions even if you're not 'making something beautiful.' It's so human. Hopefully, it tastes good. For me, there's a lot of pleasantness associated with food...I think in both the literal science/nutrition sense of when you eat 'good' food, or enough of all the foods that you feel better, things are easier. That's part of the holistic approach, the healing thing. Also emotionally and spiritually it's very nice to have good food. What tastes good to you is meaningful in some way.

Mishie expanded on food's spiritual, psychological, and identity components:

Spiritually, it has taught me a lot. I feel like a sense of pride, of 'Chineseness,' or being Asian comes from food. I hold a great sense of pride in being able to cook Cantonese food. It's like a badge of honor that I wear because I love it, but also I love sharing it with my friends. But, not even not just Chinese food, I love cooking Korean food as well. Not that I have any Korean ancestry, and I feel like I don't need to. But, my comfort food is either Korean food or Cantonese food, and oftentimes, when I want comfort food, Korean food is the top one. I'm not quite sure why. It's something about the flavor palette, familiarity. When I'm having a hard time or when I feel sick, when I'm frustrated or upset or just overworked, and I need to feel my body, it's always Korean food or Cantonese food. I think this taught me how to care for myself and others.

Idiosyncrasies Expressed through Food. Idiosyncrasies like food preferences, spice tolerance levels, health concerns (IBS), dietary needs (lactose intolerance), religious considerations (no beef or pork), and personality traits impacted how participants conducted their daily routines. For example, one's sense of adventure or trepidation might impact their approach to food exploration. Whereas Pearly was interested in food that promoted safety, soothing, and grounding, Amadeo met food choices with more adventure and exploration. For Alice and her jollof rice below, she shared, "I can express it, my personality. By choosing dishes that reflects on my taste, my preferences."

Figure 10

Alice's Jollof Rice



Note. Alice's jollof rice features four bell peppers chopped into neat tiny cubes, along with rice, chicken base, garlic, onion, and soy sauce.

Exploration came up frequently in participants' desire to be open to new experiences; Liz B highlighted:

I would consider myself somebody that's down for anything, I'll try anything one time. I think that that's also with food. Now as an adult, I used to not be this way, but I'm willing to try anything once, and I like to expand my palate, I guess, which I think also speaks to me. I've lived in a bunch of different places, and I like to explore and live different experiences.

For Tee, they also spoke about adventure and how it was expressed in their food openness, as well as a way to understand and respect how other's preferences show up in food:

Other people thought that I'm not a very adventurous person. I'm kind of shy, stereotype who would be the quiet kid—not very daring. Food along with traveling with has really taught me that I am not like that. There's a lot of like boundaries, and things I wanna explore. Food that I didn't think I would like, but I try anyway, and I discover I really like. Food also has helped me to understand others. I have friends, for example, who are more neurodivergent, they have texture issues. My initial thought when I first heard about it like, 'What the hell are you talking about, I like this texture. Why don't you like it?' But it helped me understand that it's not really for everyone and to respect that as well.

For Laura, food is integral to her identity and sense of pride. She remarked on her desire to understand people through food and her sense of curiosity and openness:

I think that's a sense of pride. It's part of my identity. When I meet new people, that's something I make sure they know about me: That I care about food. If they have interesting stories about food or interesting places, I'll be interested. And, that I'm curious about food, and that I am open to try new food and to appreciate others dishes, and that's something very, very important.

Mishie reflected on how cooking is part of an expression of her identity and with pride, and how it has taught her how to care for herself and others:

I love taking photos of food like to the point where my friends remind me if I forget now. It must be very annoying. But the food photos always look amazing and people end up stealing them posting them anyway. So, food is definitely part of my external identity. But internally, I think it goes back to physically. I think I'm made up of all the foods I've eaten in my life. I feel like if I grew up somewhere else and ate different foods, I would physically look different and feel different, that's just how much I believe food systems impact our bodily development, an expression.

Creativity and Aesthetics within Food Presentation and Preparation.

Multiple participants remarked on their desire to understand technique and the evolution of their cooking through trial and error, and embracing experimentation as a part of the creative and learning process. Amadeo expanded, “anyone can do it--it's one of those little arts we can all do. It's been meaningful to share it and have those things be shared with me... it's an easy way to incorporate play, art, and connection in our lives, whether

you're physically making it, or curating ready-made food.” Tee spoke about the element of creativity incorporating flavours:

More creatively, trying new flavors. I make macaron sometimes, and I'll put like pandan flavor. Something I tried so many times to get the flavor right...But you know a lot of people don't really think about Thai food other than mango sticky rice, or like thai tea or ice cream. But there's a lot of like more intricate dishes that I tried out during, especially during lockdown...like cakes and stuff. Moving down here to Texas, I see some of that already which is really inspiring...That's more for baking, I feel like cooking flavorwise, I'm more conventional. But I still enjoy creativity a bit.

This sense of play is also echoed in Alexander Mateo's approach:

I try to try a lot of new things. And add a bit of new derivative or recipe that will make it look nice, make it taste delicious and make it palatable. I find joy in doing that...Special occasion, like family celebrating, probably, a graduation, a lot of things, probably marriage or so...And then whenever I have a chance to cook, I put a lot of effort to it, and then I actually make it look nice and tastes good. I find joy in doing that...This is pork made by me. I enjoy eating this. I make it in my own ways...I boil it and make it steam and I love eating it when it's done. I eat this mostly all day because it's easy to prepare for me, and then I find joy in eating it.

Figure 11*Alexander's Pork Meat*

Note. Alexander added peas, pepper, and oil to his pork.

For Christene, she shared her explorations with her mother:

Let's go back to the drawing board, aka, back to my mom, the teacher, the keeper of all knowledge. Walk her through what I did and how I interpreted what she was telling me to do, because once again, the oral translation of knowledge, 'Something got lost in the mix here. Where did I go wrong?' To have her walk me through it and explain some things, or even just say, 'Okay, instead of using canned or crushed tomatoes, why don't you use tomato paste next time? And that will give you a different consistency.' She historically uses canned tomatoes and takes the time to reduce it down [or] try the tomato paste that's already reduced down. Different techniques to get the desired outcome, or to do it in a way that could work for my lifestyle, who maybe doesn't have time to reduce tomatoes.

For Amadeo, he saw artistry in cooking and expression, especially as an artist. He shared his attention to the creative and aesthetic,

One of the things I did earliest as a kid, creative cooking, was mix the different colors of dough and make rainbow and multi-colored cookies with them. That was joyful and wonderful to me. Because I've always been an artist. When I have the energy, that attention to certain things comes out. Attention to presentation comes out more versus when energy is really low, then you just see me throwing together whatever...and just caring about taste, and not about looks.

Figure 12

Amadeo's Cherry Pie



Note. Amadeo's cherry pie offers an example of his more artistic approaches to baking.

Nadia shared the impulse to capture beauty:

I was invited to a friends, and we had this little celebration, and we prepared this. My friend, she likes trying out new recipes, and she does it on special occasions. So, it was her anniversary with her partner, and she decided to show feast. It was really beautiful. So, I just decided it was impulsive. I just took the picture because I like the way it was served.

Figure 13

Nadia's Friend Celebrated with a Feast



Note. Nadia's invitation to her friend's anniversary involved a "little celebration" with 10 people, which included pasta, eggplant, greens, cheese, chicken breast, onion, and garlic.

Similarly for Kayleen, beauty is an important part of cultivating appreciation for life:

My grandparents have green thumbs. They have a really good nature to them, and so a lot of life tends to gravitate to them. They love planting orchids. What use is for orchids except for the beauty of it, right? One of my grandfather's philosophies is that, 'You look at this flower, and it's like I grow this, they don't have any benefit to me except for it's beautiful, and I get to see it from start to finish.'

That's how I want to nurture my children and my grandchildren, is that I want to see you grow and become as beautiful as you can be, or as happy as you can be...Learning that type of visual representation would be through my grandparents, just because they're just so wholesome. I think I grew like a love, for growing stuff.

I was touched by Kayleen's interview as she shared her learnings from her grandparents—it followed her larger arc of reflection about the teachings passed on by her elders in not only how to orient towards food, but to life, beauty, children, and

purpose more broadly. As Kayleen shared her photos, I was particularly enamored by her attention to the placement of things evident in the feasts.

The aesthetic appeared to be connected to the attention and care that SB also noted about care and attention in relationships. SB shared:

I like to express myself as proper, presentable, something that whenever I go out in person, and whenever I cook food for someone, I used to watch TV shows Master Chef and all a lot. They have an influence on me that, 'First, you'll eat with your eyes and then with your mouth,' so you need to make the food presentable.

The presentation of food was important for multiple participants: Who is going to eat it? How do I present it? Appreciation for beauty, presentation, and the aesthetic came through in several participants' expression of their care for others. *Me de taberu Nihonjin*, is a Japanese saying of "we eat with our eyes." Learning to care for the aesthetic and owning the appreciation for beauty was a journey for me. Beauty overall seemed like a place to appreciate the aesthetic, yet I have seen multiple arenas disregard attention to beauty as vanity, frivolity, or weary. It is a juggling act to balance my sense for everyday practicality and the ways my eyes sparkle for *moritsuke*, Japanese food presentation. The closest I can bring myself to aesthetic is through collecting pretty and quaint dinnerware, as inspired by the portioning and elegance of *kobachi*. I have noticed that taking an extra moment to make things more presentable when I serve others, usually elicits a delight about the presentation, and my heart swells a teensy bit when somebody decides to document the moment in appreciation for the added care. In my moment of appreciation and prayer before eating, taking in the care, taking in the labour, and taking in the gift of providence.

Intentionality and Gratitude as Ways to Orient to Food Practices Daily.

Participants discussed the importance of bringing intention to different parts of everyday practice with food, whether it was about intentionally enjoying the meal and ensuring others would enjoy it too, sharing or preparing, intentionally thinking about taking care of themselves or others, listening to their bodies, or being mindful of their experiences. For Yi Shi, this looked like quality time and being present in the moment:

Whereas eating food, either eating outside [or] hanging with friends at a new restaurant, that's allocating a chunk of time to be present. In terms of staying at home and cooking, or staying at home and eating, it's also taking a chunk of time to actually prepare and be mindful of how you want to care for yourself. Personally, that calms myself down, just by allocating that chunk of time to do something nourishing and valuable...A lot of people don't eat the same way...For me, usually when I'm when I'm living a repetitive lifestyle, I would dread having to prepare food for myself just because it feels more like a survival skill...than being intentional in a process of eating food and enjoying food. It feels more like out of survival, not out of enjoyment.

Figure 14

Yi's Friend Visited from New York



Note. Yi shared that the day after the onboarding interview, they received their friend from New York to go and eat some Chinese food, especially food from their shared region.

Zafiro discussed the intention behind her eating and making choices that resonated with her:

Also, my relationship changed when I was able to choose more - the food that I wanted and didn't want to eat. Because a lot of the times with my parents it was like, 'you gotta eat it.' You don't choose. Just eat it. And that was very hard. I understand why they did it. Sometimes, it was because it was the only thing that we had to eat at that moment. Or that they were very busy, and that it was the only thing that could be prepared at the moment. Sometimes, it was price.

Then, for having good grades or something, they would take us to somewhere that we chose. I feel that when I had the opportunity to live by myself—well, not by myself, with Laura—just choose what we eat every day, understanding where it came from, cooking it every day, every meal. I think I'm more aware of why I choose to eat what I eat. And if it makes me happy or not—be more conscious about that relationship.

Intentionality was also evident in Christene's interview:

[Healing] means intentional reflection, intentional time, the idea of intentionality... healing is an individual journey in a lot of senses. But culturally, I think that it's very community-based. It's very connection-based... You're doing some of those things that are meaningful...and spending our time in the community... We can heal through others, or others facilitate and support and encourage our healing, encourage us to be the truest forms of our self, or to open ourselves up in a really vulnerable way.

For Christene, she talked about healing this relationship with food and how eating with a mindset to be intentional in her enjoyment and share in cultural experience has shifted her experiences:

Over the last few years—I've always been a pretty adventurous and open eater—but I think in healing my own relationship with my body, I have therefore healed my relationship with food in a lot of ways. Rather than seeing food as purely fuel and function, my mindset is very much eat to enjoy, eat to share cultural experience. So, my relationship with food has grown and evolved into something that's a lot more free-flowing and carefree and enjoyable and fun.

For Mishie, photo documentation with food was a more natural, daily occurrence.

Mishie reflected on the sets of photos she wanted to share and decided on these intergenerational moments with her mother and with her partner's children:

There's more intentionality and thinking about why I make them as I was making them and telling them about your study and them excited to be part of it, too. I really enjoyed the process. It wasn't like it made me do something different, but I approached it in a different way...

When I'm intentional, I'm cooking for a reason, not just cooking for cooking. That's just that's just one night of the week. I mean one night of the week, every 2 weeks, or something. But, other nights of the week, it's like 'Go go, go!' It's very much like 'kids come home, we have the schedule, their bed time is at 8:30.' Everything needs to be done before that until a lot of our meals nowadays are very simple meals, or Costco prepped food that we can just throw into the oven and bake it and stuff. So, it definitely is not this extravagant all the time because this is just not accessible time wise.

When I cook, I feel like there's more of an intentionality aspect rather than like rushing through the process of just doing it...Going back to the first

session was still stark to me, I didn't think I had these intergenerational connections, I didn't really think about them. I thought, 'this is just what I do—what I have always done and I've always seen.' ...But I appreciate being able to think about that deeper, and then realize that behind this intentionality there is a lot of meaningfulness there, and meaning being made.

For Mishie, having more intentionality behind her documentation process, even once a week, helped slow her thought process around her schedule, and understand her purpose behind her methods. She wanted to highlight the importance of generational transmission of knowledge within this study, which helped her notice her parents' efforts and focus on her own key moments of preparation and effort.

Tee talked about food as a creative outlet and a stress reliever that is community-oriented and context-dependent:

In grad school, I cooked a lot because I lived in Indiana, and there's not any good Asian food where I was, the closest was Chicago, and I'm not gonna drive two hours every time I wanted dim sum. Well, I will for dim sum, but not for pad thai and stuff like that. I think that was also when I started to think more about my heritage and everything. But my relationship to food was more like a creative outlet, food as a means of stress relief to procrastinate because I didn't want to write a paper, so I'll just cook to feel like I'm productive. Also, sharing with my friends, baking and stuff—that was a way of building community as well.

Tee similarly reflected on the intentionality behind the documentation process, and the historical tension behind some of their recipes:

To be honest, this [was] a little bit hectic. I had a whole plan. I was even gonna take pictures of myself going to the grocery store and of the different grocery stores...And then I completely forgot at the moment. Especially the recipes I talked about kind of the different history, because these days, I don't really think much about it. Just really thinking about meal prepping and stuff like that.

It's not really enough time to reflect on the role of specific recipes in my life. I appreciate the exercise because it gives me a chance to reflect and think back on it. I enjoyed it... The first one was more about food moments. Even if food wasn't in the picture, but what I was thinking about

or interacting with other people in the moment. The second one was more self-reflective, looking to the past and also to the future. To the past in the sense of who I got the recipe from, the future as like, ‘Okay, I’m gonna recover from surgery. So, what do I need? How do I take care of myself?’

Tee’s reflections prompted them to notice their relational intimacies and commitments with others. They further spoke about their orientation to food as a way to understand their past and future. It is difficult to be intentional and mindful in all of our daily activities. What participants shared about the added intentionality was a connected appreciation for how they currently operate and the journey they have been through to arrive at their current place with food practices. In this next subtheme, participants continue to share their experience of care and connection with others through food sharing.

Social: Caring and Connection is Observed in Sharing and Receiving

Food is part of our survival and as such, embedded in the everyday experiences, which can show up in our relationships with family, friends, lovers, colleagues, community, and kin. From food stories, eating together, preparation, and other activities done with intention, all participants spoke about food in a way that indicated that partaking in food was integral in their experiences of relationships and connection. For Pearly, “food for me can journey back to my background. It’s commitment about family, you’ve been together with families, there’s a kind of different joy you have.”

Expressing Affect and Affection

Affect can be expressed in the enjoyment of food. For Alice, it was significant that people can emote their appreciation for food, and that she offered her expressions of appreciation too. She shared pictures of hanging with a friend at the beach, enjoying ice-cream and games.

I express myself through food—when I'm eating something, and I feel like it's delicious, I show it on my face—this expression on my face is good. When I eat something that isn't delicious, you can easily read it. It's on my face, 'this food is bad.' You can really see it on their face, without even them talking. You see it on their face first.

Figure 15

Alice's Fun Beach Day with her Friend



Note. Alice and her friend enjoyed some fun with games, ice-cream, and the beach.

Like Alice, who talked about expressing affect and appreciation with her expressions, Pearly remarked on the importance of offering her compliments to the chef:

Okay, how do I celebrate with food? What you say after the meal. How do you feel? Ask questions after the meal. That's how I celebrate, kind of appreciating foods. If the food is prepared by someone, you have to give some kudos, some good remarks. That's how I celebrate a good meal.

For Christene, food appeared central to showing appreciation and affection, and observed in initial greetings with one another:

Every moment was something that centered around friendship, sharing of food, creating meals together, even going out to eat together, the cultural experience, just the community aspect of it. Growing up in a South Asian culture, where food was always so central to gathering, and showing love and affection and appreciation...

The act of making food together or making food for someone I love is something that I think I learned from my family in terms of showing appreciation and affection for people... Enjoying food, specifically with people, is now a very central trait to who I am, how I express love, and also just like when I feel the most connected to people in my life. When we're making food together, when we're eating together...

I have a lot of friends who are also Asian, or immigrants... That act of going to someone's house and the first thing, 'What are we eating? What can I make you? What can I give you?' I was visiting a friend's family home the other day, and her mom was like, 'Take this with you when you go!' All of these things that she had made, you just don't leave empty-handed. Sharing food is central to showing love.

Christene documented foods that were evident of her mother's labour of love:

This is her famous Tandoori chicken, and dahl, which is lentils and rice. And a little bit of vegetables. [I thought] I have to take a photo of the Tandoori chicken, that staple of summer, staple of my mom's labor of love. Anytime a friend comes over in the summertime, [I always ask] 'please, will you make it, this is the best dish?' It's always that comfort food of eating at home.

And over this meal, she was telling me about how to make this recipe, and I was like, 'Oh, I have all of that stuff at home, perfect. I'm gonna go home and do that.' Then, I went home and attempted it for dinner, and it was good, just different.

Figure 16

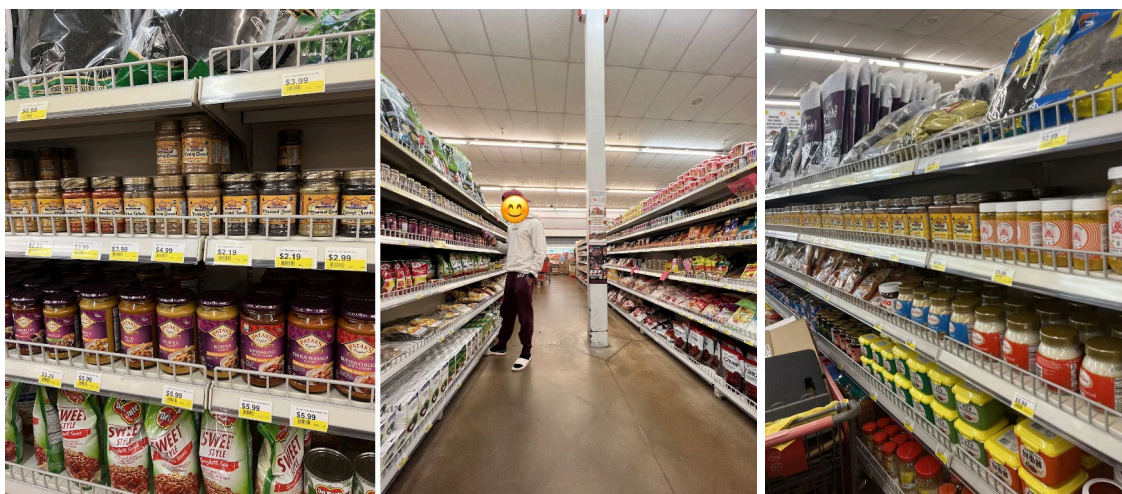
Christene's Mother's Tandoori Chicken and Dahl, and Her Attempt



Note. Christene offered a contrasting look of eating her mother's amazing food in the morning, and making her own food in the evening.

This affection and expression of love is also reflected in SB's intimacy with his mother and the centrality of food in their relationship:

Grocery-shopping has become a healing experience for me. Whenever I walk through the aisles in Indian Stores or even Walmart, I am reminded of how my mom used to carefully select each item for our meals back home. I find myself naturally gravitating towards the ingredients she loved to cook with. It's as if her presence guides me in choosing the right spices and products. When I reach for the familiar brands and items I feel connected to my roots and culture. After a satisfying shopping trip, I can't help I share my grocery haul with her, discussing the recipes I plan to recreate. This makes her super happy as for my mom the best thing is if her son is eating. I remember how after giving my most important exam she didn't ask me how did the exam go but she asked me did you eat anything. She is happy if I eat good food. And I am happy if she is. This simple act of grocery-shopping has become a precious way for me to stay close to my mom and embrace the traditions that make me who I am.

Figure 17*SB's Grocery Shopping*

Note. SB offered his captions to this triptych, “me analysing carefully what ingredients are best, how fresh is the food, comparing with other stuff so I get the best deal, and also checking the ‘best before date.’”

Grocery shopping with my mother and snack shopping with my sister are some of my favourite errands. My mother tested my ability to pick fresh and ripe produce by sending me away to a produce section and then evaluating whether I have indeed picked out what was the best there. I delighted in observing what was new and on sale with my sister, and we would talk about the many snacks we would enjoy (only picking one or two after much discussion). When SB observed his mother’s line of questioning directed to his being fed and Christene, her friends’ immigrant parents invitations around food, I smiled and thought about a Chinese greeting, where people regularly follow hello with, ‘食咗飯未呀? [sik zo faan mei ah] or ‘Have you eaten yet?’ These check-ins usually open up the space to offer food if no food has been consumed yet. SB’s experience of connection to his culture and his mother was directed by questions like, What would my mother choose? How do I follow her guidance? Grocery shopping can reveal an archive

of our values and how we are taught, as well as reveal our access to our cultures based on locality. SB reflected on what ingredients are common in the States as well as his mother's desire to connect him to things back home, thus the care packages she sends. Christene reflected on needing to adjust and experiment based on our access, timing, and resources—these contexts reveal yet another layer of adjustment and our relationships to our broader contexts.

Yi Shi shared photos of a moment of connection with one of their queer high school friends. They chose a restaurant based off their friend's preferences and told the story of their reunion and catchup. I found their points of socialization important to remark on alongside their choice in regional food. Yi started their anecdote with, "my high school classmate came to visit from the States. He's still working on his Ph.D. at Princeton. I went to school with a bunch of super, super, smart people. They're all doing their Ph.Ds and post-docs in the States at this time." Yi Shi's pride in their friend's achievement was lovely to witness and felt like a cultural moment to highlight—bragging is more acceptable when it is done by the other, and Yi Shi uplifting their friend(s) achievements felt not just about them pursuing higher education, but also being able to succeed in North America. Yi continued:

Just for context, we're both originally from China in our region, Hangzhou, Shanghai, surrounding area in the province. We all came to the States or Canada ten years ago for school, and then we also just stayed ever since. We don't go home that often, probably once a year at most. Due to Covid, some of us haven't been home for three or four years...

He's also queer. I don't really keep contacts with high school friends that much, and especially after we just dispersed into different parts of the world...I always find it easier to talk with queer people just because we're not at the stage of getting married, family planning. It feels different, and the connection is also different. I asked him, 'Okay, what do you wanna eat?' Usually meeting an old friend, we go to a restaurant. We go eat food

and then catch up. It's somehow a tradition. He says, 'Chinese food, for sure because it's really hard to get Chinese food in some cities in the States, unless it's a big city, unless it's New York.'

This is the part where we were catching up, and he was showing me - we chat, group chat like high school gossips, and how some of them met up earlier this year in New York because it's been ten years, so there's a kind of a ten year graduation anniversary. ... Everybody's busy. People are wild, so talented. But, lot more gossips about dating, some people had second kids already. Some people have trouble finding a partner. It's the gossip over food.

Figure 18

Yi and Friend Enjoyed Wontons with a Side of Gossip



Note. Yi noted that these wontons are not like Cantonese wontons and captured the delicious addition of high school gossip from a recent 10-year graduation reunion.

Their attention to the shared queerness was important to contextualize the reunion given that high school gossip can highlight our disconnections and connections to societal demands around children, marriage, and domesticity. Yi Shi's angle of gossip also felt like a wonderful reconnection to a feminized approach in socialization that is often demeaned and devalued—it was a way for these Chinese diasporic queers to articulate

how they understood their own life stages and choices in shared relation against heteropatriarchal standards and known mutuals. I am reminded of how kiki-ing feels particularly queer in the jokes made and the light reading of straight impositions that come from heteroculture.

For Liz B., she shared a moment of relationality and culture with tacos:

I like tacos and quesadillas. I have a soft spot because I'm from Mexico, but also, there's a taco stand that's in front of my house, and I've become friends with the taco man. It's really sweet going and getting tacos, and he'll always give me free stuff, and then I feel bad for stealing almost, and he knows me by name.

I got to LA 4 years ago to start my program, and he started his taco stand that same year...It was their four year anniversary a few months ago, and I got them a cake, and they were really excited about that. So it's a cultural experience, a process of getting the tacos and eating them... I'm very defensive about them. There's another stand that set up in front of them on the other side of the street. And I'm always like, "Fuck those guys, I hate them, nobody go there, go to this man!" He feels like a distant family member.

Figure 19

Liz's Tacos and Quesadillas from the Taco Man



Note. Liz's al pastor tacos and carne asada quesadillas were loaded with onions, cilantro, and lime. She shared occasionally eating them at the stand, but in this instance she brought them back to her apartment to enjoy it with RuPaul's Drag Race.

This was a very sweet story to hear—how Liz B. developed a deep enough relationship to celebrate a food vendor who helped her feel close to home. Her protectiveness over his taco stand also engaged a sentiment around the humble beginnings and family-centeredness that frequently is written in the histories of mom-and-pop shops. Liz B. talked about her experience of social relationships as supportive of her ethnic and racial identity, alongside her queer identity. For Liz B., she expanded on a part of her that is less visible, and frequently erased:

In terms of my identity, I identify as queer. I feel like it's not necessarily a part of my identity that is often seen or recognized. I'm married to a man.

If I really think about it, no one really asks me about it. So, I feel like RuPaul's is my one way of connecting with this. In the past, I used to connect with that more. But here, I haven't found a crew that would be down to go to local drag shows or watch stuff with me. This is my first attempt at going and doing something in the community. Even though my husband is obviously not part of that community, he went with me anyway. And then, I had a friend that went with me as well and she doesn't like RuPaul's or identify as LGBTQ, so, for almost no reason other than to hang out with me.

Figure 20

Liz's Night Out in Community



Note. Liz has seen every season of RuPaul's Drag Race, and saw the House of Love cocktails from the show 'out in the wild.'

Liz B.'s loved ones and allies who understood their presence to be important to her, helped her feel more connected and supported in her experiences of her queer identity. Kayleen offered reflections of their queerness and transness in the wisdoms passed through food and their grandparents. Kayleen shared:

Food is about bringing people together... It brings me happiness and joy of getting a space together... The ability to be grateful for the things that you have is a huge thing of navigating my identity. For example, when I came out to my grandparents, I had this huge fear of, 'Oh, they're going to disown me.' When I came out to my family, they were super accepting... My aunt was the first person to message me privately was like, 'I was not surprised'....

With our relationship, before the process of having it on your plate into your mouth is that you're growing some sort of way. Like my grandpa's philosophy of growing a flower, right? You're there from the beginning, from like... the seed stage, germination all the way to producing the fruits of your labor, to create something to have other people smile. Reflecting on how I was raised in terms of my relationship with food was being able to recognize like, 'Hey, they have been supportive of me this whole journey.'

I just need to recognize that and take that step because regardless, they still love me. I think that's such an empowering thing, also in Buddhism, we have another thing like, 'You continue to grow with the times. You can't just continue to stay because if you continue to stay, everything's gonna go, and you're gonna be there. It's the same thing, everything continues to move on. That's the famous growing pains, and being able to like venture out.

I was very moved by Kayleen's patience with their caregivers' journey of understanding and accepting their queer and gender non-conforming children. Kayleen reflected on the invisible labour—much of it unseen and the turbulence of weathering before harvest, all of the love poured into raising children, which resonated with me. It is hard to guarantee whether a caregiver might be supportive, and sometimes in the experience of their initial confusion, disappointment, anger, or shame, it might be easy to forget the longer journey they have had in growing the seed. Kayleen's wisdom offers a balm: that the journey to acceptance might be layered with drier weather or stormier days, and yet, that is not the end of the seed's growth.

Christene shared a moment with her friend connecting on foods they liked:

At a Korean BBQ with one of my best friends, and I took a photo of it because it's kind of funny, the table is filled to the brim with food. I think that's fun and special because this friend - throughout the course of our friendship - we've been friends for almost 9 years now - has taught me so much about her culture. She's the friend from Hong Kong, and not that Korean BBQ is from her culture, but I just think that in general, being exposed to foods that she loves or things that she loves, this is a restaurant that she in particular loves, and she lived in Korea 2 years, so coming, sharing a lot of the knowledge that she learned... Every time I go to Korean BBQ with her, she does all of the cooking. It makes me feel so loved. The other photo was from the same evening with her where we went. She was showing me this ice cream place that she loved that was Asian inspired. We got Hong Kong milk tea and jasmine tea flavored ice cream, which was also amazing.

Figure 21

Christene and Her Friend Enjoyed Korean BBQ and Asian Gelato



Note. Christene's appreciation for her community, people, and family was largely connected to sharing meals, whether going out, cooking for one another, creating meals, or sharing food.

Food moments do not necessarily need to be about one's own cultural foods. One can also relate to food that they like and share that moment with loved ones. Eating food can be about connection with loved ones and the gathering of people around food itself.

Individualization is Care for Preferences, Needs, and Restrictions

Tee contextualized food as a language and communication tool, one frequently around care, “food is also a powerful way to show others how you feel about them, or how you care about them. Food is a means of communicating across differences. Even if you don't believe in the same thing [or speak in the same language], you can still share the common language of food.” Sharing a common language in food allowed for Zafiro to connect with her family, “even if I couldn't connect with some of them in different ways, food was always a way to connect, and learn from each other and be with each other. It's a different language that I learned from a very young age, mostly women, but also one of my uncles in Mexico.” For Tee, they also modified food to show care to meet needs of people they care about. They reflected:

I had a friend over, and he was staying for a few days, and I had made kimchi fried rice. But I forgot that this one cannot handle spice very well. So, I made another batch in my rice cooker trying to dilute it. My friend was like, ‘What's taking you so long? Like I can smell it, it smells good. What are you still doing in the kitchen?’ I had to tell him that I forgot, and I have to dilute the rice. But, I think it meant a lot to him, because he still tells that story, even though it's been like three or four years. It's kind of touching a little bit, kind of that [caring] aspect it came across.

It was evident within Tee's general approach to people that food is an element of demonstrating care and love, and their consideration for people's preferences, dietary requirements was a strong theme throughout their interview,

I started a new job back in March, and around my first two weeks...I baked some focaccia and brought it to the office, and it was the just the way to say thank you to my coworkers who have helped me at the new

job, and also for me, I think a lot of people have a hard time asking for a hug, or haven't had time communicating their needs, and I feel like food is a universal way of helping others...I don't know many people who don't like [focaccia], except for people who maybe have celiac or a gluten intolerance. If you need something read, or if you need something dropped off, or if you're sick, that's something I can do. That's the way I show that I care for people.

Participants consideration of people's ability to enjoy the food, such as their preferences and dietary restrictions appeared multiply across participants. For some, like Kayleen, the criterion for choosing food is, 'Can it be shared with others?' Kayleen explained that she would purchase fruits instead of candy bars because of her living with her grandparents:

I don't eat a lot of sweets, and my grandparents try to avoid sweets just because they're older. So, a good way to cleanse the palette is through fruit, and the natural sweetness in it. Being able to think about, 'Oh, we don't want artificial sugars and additives'...and go to grocery store and be like, 'Oh, I'm gonna choose fruit over this candy bar because that's something that I can share.'

Another way in which Kayleen considered her grandparents' diet was her use of Chinese medicinal soup:

My grandmother has Chinese medicinal soup, or tea. Since I live with my grandparents, a lot of it is medicinal just because they're older. It's still good, not strange. Something they cook pretty often is this black chicken. It has various different herbs in it. It's like a soup, you can eat it with some rice and some vegetables, or something like that, or even noodles. It's very versatile.

Kayleen also highlighted the perspective taking that can happen by taking on their grandparents' thought process:

The most emotional [part of the study] was the Đám Giỗ because it took me to home and it's such a deeply rooted tradition. It's very impactful. I think it's very heavy in terms of understanding the true meaning behind why we do what we do. That was emotional for me to process when I was doing that. Other than that, it's pretty good... I started to think more about

why they do what they do. My grandmother would be like, 'Oh, why don't you eat at home as much on the weekdays?' I respond with, 'Well, I'm busy at school, and they offer me free food at school, so I eat there. ...Sitting down, having these dinners with them is more impactful for me because it's just like, 'Oh, they actually care.' They don't want me to be like starving and weak, and don't have the energy to do my daily things.

Eating food with loved ones can have a powerful impact on one's body and mind, and Kayleen's experience of her grandparents' consideration of her daily energy was enveloped with love, care, and worry.

Tasting the Care Within Food Itself. Sometimes people jokingly talk about their secret ingredient being love. Here, multiple participants share their observations of noticing the taste of love, care, and attention within their food. SB shared, "We need to care about the food - to make sure we give it perfect taste, perfect time, not to be too much, to less which is what I learnt about it—to do certain tasks in life you have to be precise about the time, care, and attention." Alexander discussed how the effort is embodied in the food and evident in the taste, "I'm doing something special. I put a lot of effort into it...It improves my—let's just say relationships with friends because you are able to like taste out of it. And then we spend some time together. That seems great."

Laura discussed the care component in food as connected to her experiences of her mother's care from childhood, which now informs her personal approach to others:

[Caring for] the people we love, or bringing the people we love to the table by cooking these meals. I think that the care component - mostly when I prepare food and when I eat, and caring about the process and that people enjoy the food. I think that's something that is part of me or my personality that I care about my friends or very close people...It has an emotional component because it brings me to my childhood when my mom was looking after us. She cared a lot about our well-being, and her way of taking care of our well-being was cooking with love and care.

Laura's mother's demonstration of love and care in her family has modeled to Laura how she similarly cares for her "four levels of family"—her parents and siblings, her wife, her wife's family (including in-laws, siblings, cousins, uncles, etc.), and her chosen family. Her careful attention to love, care, and respect within the process are revealed in the different ways in which she has learnt about personalization. Laura shared:

One is cooking with care, love, and respect. Those are my values. Even when I cook, or when I buy food, when I notice that a restaurant or people don't care or don't have respect for the food, or they just don't have this love towards the process or the ingredients, I don't enjoy it, and I try to avoid those places.

Some of the things in my life are almost sacred. Because [food] unites my three levels of family. It is also a way to keep growing my families because something that I share with some of my best friends is food...My first teacher is my mom. I learned to care about food. Not only about food, but the process and the people that are going to enjoy that specific meal. I think [my mom] was my most important teacher.

Then my dad, in terms of enjoying the food—personalizing it. There's a way of eating certain things. There's some fishes and an etiquette on how you should eat them. My dad taught me that you can change that, and you can eat them as you like.

My next teacher would be my wife because I think she brought international food to my life which was not common in my nuclear family. She brought Japanese food, and a whole new world of food in another level of appreciation: ingredients, dishes, stories and food. I learned how to build community through food, to having meals with friends. And I learned that from my wife and her family. I think that those three have been teachers."

Laura's attention to care was evident throughout her interview when she spoke of her experience of care through her relationships:

Mostly when I prepare food and when I eat, and caring about the process and that people enjoy the food. I think that's something that is part of me or my personality that I care about my friends or very close people. The other thing is about meaning, that when I eat food, it's very important for

me that it is meaningful. It's not only tasty or an intellectual experiment—that has meaning, and I think that in my life, I always look for meaning, even in my professional career. In life, for me, it's very important to be a loving person to the people I work with or the people I interact with. And for me, food is a very beautiful way to show that.”

For Laura, care within her food routines also involved gently reminding her wife to take medication, “My wife and I almost always have lunch together, and we take our medications. We both take medications, so it's a good match. We are very good patient-partners as well—I remind her to take her medication, she reminds me, and we do that when we are having lunch.”

For some, the learning to care for others via cooking was situational and context dependent. SB reflected on how COVID increased his sense of urgency to take on a new skill that he had not immersed himself in previously:

[My mom] never discouraged me. I like that she never discouraged me, but I was not cooking full-fledged all the meals what she used to cook. It's just very occasionally. But then, this covid thing happened, and my mom got covid, and she could not cook. In India, we have maids, but the maids were also not coming because of the covid, they had to be isolated. My dad does not know how to cook. My sister does not, so it's and just four of us live in the house. I knew a little bit, so I had to cook for everyone.

I realized how difficult of a task it is to make food. I learned in those two or three months, I had to cook the whole food. Even though my sister and my dad, they don't know how to do it, but they used to help me chopping, but I used to make the whole food, and chapati was not completely round, but I learned, and now, I can kind of make it. This is all how I learned how to make food, it was all in covid times, but my family is vegetarian.

I did not know how to make non-vegetarian or chicken or something. So when I came to the city, my friends from Southern India, being non-vegetarian is very common, but not in Northern India. They taught me how to make chicken. When I was living with those roommates in Salt Lake City and University of Utah, I learned how to make chicken, and now I can cook really good, my friends say good things about my food. So, I'm proud of it.

SB's appreciation for cooking grew as he was tasked to cook for his family when his mother had COVID and their maid could not interact with their bubble. I found the shift within his diet also interesting, to move from being vegetarian to non-vegetarian given his immigration to the states. While SB still holds close some of his traditions and values around not eating beef, his migration to the States shifted his contexts and access. Through trial and error, and much observation of his mother, SB shared his new learnings as he fed himself and his friends in the U.S.

Laura mentioned how intrinsically connected and curious she was about people's food stories. She shared how that care has been taught to her through her mother:

My mother's recipes will always be at the top. Her tacos, I think they taste amazing. And they are so comforting for me. It has an emotional component because it brings me to my childhood when my mom was looking after us. She cared a lot about our well-being, and her way of taking care of our well-being was cooking with love and care.

The sense of connection to roots or strengthened roots come through for Laura, "it has taught me a way me to connect with my roots...not only in my family, in my hometown, but my friends. Important stages and important people in my life—in my practices, I try to remember them, [have] them there with me, bring them to the table with me." For Laura, it looks like connecting to parents and siblings who do the same daily practice of enjoying food.

Food is a way to show love, and this is echoed in Christene's experience of her friends' consideration of her and what she has learnt from family about the experience of food together. Everyone requires sustenance, so caring about food itself and dietary restrictions means caring about people who are going to eat those foods. To Christene,

having time related to food with someone means she has a chance to think in that person's shoes and reminisce on her past cooking experiences with her family

Now, when I want to spend time with my friends most of the time, it has something to do with food and connection. The act of making food together or making food for someone I love is something that I think I learned from my family in terms of showing appreciation and affection for people... Acts of service is kind of my love language, my desire to give and show care for someone through food, but more so through the act of, 'Hey, like I'm thinking of you. I'm thinking of what you would like to eat.' I have friends who have dietary restrictions. 'I'm thinking of how you and I can enjoy food together.' And thinking about something that we would both enjoy, and thinking about a memory that we've had around food that we could recreate or connect on."

For Christene, meaning is made through the desire to know one another, discover new things together, and create things in shared appreciation:

You're the only person I know who likes this or who makes this at home, so let's do this together.' I've come to understand that is a way I like to give of my time and energy and affection, both through creating food, but also through the consideration of, 'Oh, what is meaningful to this person, and also meaningful to me, and what connects us in our shared experiences that I've learned about you that I can come to appreciate?' ... One of them is vegetarian because one of our friends is Halal, so they don't eat pork, and that kind of thoughtfulness of, 'I know that you love mushrooms on your pizza, let's put mushrooms on it.'

I slept over at one of my friends houses, and she just woke up and instantly started making me breakfast in the morning without even asking. I feel like that idea for someone who already would know what I want, who is already showing love through food - she just woke up before me and started making food. As I woke up, she was already at it, once again, that expression of love, of sharing, that when you're in someone's space, they are going to feed you and take care of you. That's why it was really beautiful that we were sharing food in that way once again. It's also a demonstration of how well she knows me and that she wants to care for me.

Figure 22*Christene and Her Friend's Demonstration of Care*

Note. Christene's reflections about her week's experiences involved spending time with people showing love and thoughtfulness in a similar way.

Tee's interview was touching in how they addressed care for their kin and community. They shared a set of moments that involved caring for their friend who was having gender affirming surgery. In a set of photos, they shared about their airplane snacks, waiting in the hospital with their friend's boyfriend, the bags of food they prepared to be stored in the freezer, and celebrating as a community. This was connected to their experience of post-surgical care and the weeks of preparation involved. Tee also reflected on the reciprocity of care, given that this particular friend had been there for Tee's gender affirming surgery a few years ago too. Tee shared:

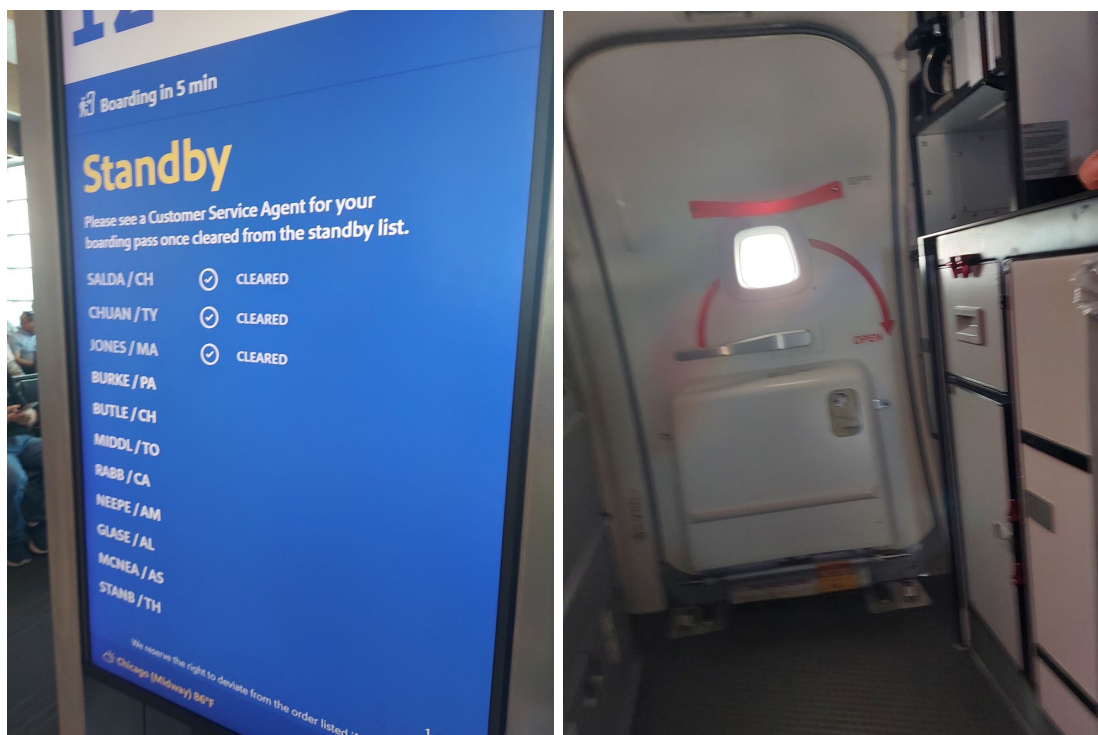
My friend [Brandon], the 'kimchi fried rice' friend was having gender affirming surgery. I flew there in late July to take care of him after his

third or fourth week. ...I was so stressed out I couldn't eat because...you have to wait for an hour before the flight to get the seat...and I couldn't eat anything because I was so nervous that I wouldn't be able to make it but I just told myself, 'If I just make it to Chicago,' which is to flight through there and 'I'll be fine.' I forgot to take a picture of my lunch after that...

This was after the plane took off, and the flight attendant gave me extra snack even though I didn't do anything. I was kind of in the way because there was not a lot of space, but they still gave me extra snack and I didn't really eat well before, so I really appreciated that. We work for the same company, but not like we know each other or anything. So, it was just a little moment of care that I appreciate it.

Figure 23

Tee's Flight, Nerves, and Stress



Note. Tee captured the Standby list and some moments when they could not eat because they were so nervous about making it to their friend's surgery.

This was the view of the waiting area for the hospital for [Brandon's] surgery. It was around lunchtime, I was hungry. I got some food, and it was good, like the flavor was good, but I was still a little nervous for my friend, and I was eating with his boyfriend. His boyfriend is kind of an

awkward guy, so we didn't really talk much. I think we're both nervous for my friend. But, we didn't really know how to best express it. So, we just kind of like sat and ate together, but didn't talk much, but if it's kind of a moment of waiting.

This was after the surgery. I forgot to take a picture of the food I made for [Brandon]... We went out to this poke place in my hometown, and this where my friend [Josh] and the roommate we hadn't seen each other for almost a year. We're just kind of talking and catching up...even sharing the appetizer like the dumpling. It was just a nice moment...

Figure 24

Tee's Continued Waiting and Nervousness



Note. Tee captured the another moment of waiting and nervousness, and when they could eat with more relief.

I have surgery myself on the eleventh. I was doing all the prep myself. It was a laparoscopic hysterectomy, a lot less intensive than other surgeries I've had, but still I wasn't in full recovery. For the first six weeks I'm not allowed to lift anything more than like five to ten pounds, or bend over too much. I knew that I was gonna have to prepare food, and I had done that before. This surgery was three years ago, so it wasn't my first rodeo, but it was a lot to prepare... But this was to prepare food that I had, and just thinking about all you have to prepare for myself and other planning. It was a moment of self-care...

I also bought food that was easy for me to prepare after surgery, because I had my friend stay over for a week. They flew from Michigan to come take care of me, but they could only stay for a week, so I also got six

dozen eggs ‘cause I knew there was something that would be easy to prepare, anticipating what my needs were after my friend left.

Figure 25

Tee’s Fridge in Preparation for Surgery After-Care



Note. Tee took a picture of their freezer in the middle of a food prep moment and noted that this was “not even all the food.”

I put in a friend’s recipe. This is a picture of the food I prepared to put in the freezer. This is the Lao Gan Ma fried rice. Back in 2020 during the lockdown, my friend—he’s white—follows a youtuber who’s also white, [and] that youtuber was obsessed with Lao Gan Ma and he had a recipe for like Lao Gan Ma popcorn or something. My friend was obsessed with this, and at the time, the shelves were so empty because everyone stocked up on their food, and he sent me a bottle of Lao Gan Ma from Amazon...it cost him \$20...I didn’t have to heart to tell him that when I was in Indiana, there was still some on the shelf for like 4 bucks.

I didn’t tell him that, I still appreciated him sending that, that he thought of me, even though he didn’t know that I still had access to it. He didn’t teach me this specific recipe. It was actually the recipe from the bottom or the

back of the can or from the website. But every time I cook using it, I think about him.

Figure 26

Tee's Lao Gan Ma Fried Rice



Note. Tee took a picture of their bags of Lao Gan Ma fried rice and their friend's spirit in this recipe.

I prepare for this surgery, it gets me thinking—I have just taken care of him for his own surgery, but he took care of me for my surgery previously three years ago. Especially now, with the context of preparing this for my own surgery, I was thinking about the good times we have, to get a time to care for each other, and even though he couldn't be with me because he was recovering from his own surgery, that he's still there in spirit.

Tee echoed Pearly's sentiments about tasting the love behind the food, and they shared how good company was significant in a celebration:

I feel like celebrating with food is maybe more than the food, it's the company. If it's a potluck—I remember growing up, we would have friends over in a potluck. It was just a lot of fun to talk about the food itself, too, and not just tasting it, but also hearing about the labor of love gone through to make the food. Even little things like going to Trader Joe's and getting an extra bag of snacks because it's been a long week.

Even like my friend who took me out for dinner. After my surgery, it was great, the company is key.

This profound exchange of care within the queer and trans community was beautiful to listen to. I found it tender, endearing, and funny to think about their purchase of Lao Gan Ma to please Tee. There was a Lao Gan Ma vanilla ice cream trend that surfaced a few years ago—the chili oil brand’s lack of availability and ubiquity created a strange space here; it was a transnational sensation that did not quite make it to their local context, and the ways that Tee’s friend overpaid is both funny in its excess and generous in thought. This touched me in Tee’s contemplation about how they observe their friends’ food practices with them, and their experience of the exchange of care more broadly.

Food can also be an indirect way to demonstrate acceptance of (queer) loved ones.

SB shared an anecdote of his mother’s consideration of his partner:

I’m not a big fan of tea. I don’t drink tea usually, but my mom sent this because [Paul] loves tea, but he never had Indian tea. So, my friend went to India, and my mom was like, ‘Oh, I’ll send it for [Paul].’ She sent it, and it was there, so I was making it for [Paul]. I made sure to make it like my mom because she’s a pro. I want to make it at least as close to her, whenever I do that, he liked it, so I was like, ‘Wow, this is good.’

Credit goes to my mom for teaching me how to make chai because although I did not used to drink it...this is something which any time when someone comes over or as a guest, you just go and give it to them. Sometimes, when my mom was not there, she used to tell me, ‘Be a good host, and go make tea.’ I served some of my guests back in India, and here, now I know how to make tea. It came very close to my mom’s...

Offering-food-to-guests practice is affected by SB’s culture and repeating the same welcoming food practices in the US helps SB continue his practices of home-making and hosting. His mother’s demonstrated acceptance of partners and loved one’s relationship is also a lovely way to show consideration.

Figure 27*SB's Chai as Taught by His Mother*

Note. SB endeavoured to make it as good as his mother's and took pride whenever the taste is the same.

We share food with people we love: the act of giving or making food for loved ones is not necessarily embedded in cultural foods and can be within whatever foods help connect with another person. Laura talked about her weekly dinners with family: nuclear family, partner, and chosen family, and in the same breath of expanding and combining recipes, she is expanding her family systems. Tee reflected on trans kin and community showing up for each other's gender journeys with food. Christene, Tee, and Kayleen shared how they consider people's restrictions and preferences to translate the fullness of their care. Others have also expanded on this concept thinking about care for the process,

respect for the ingredient, or creating specific dishes that are to somebody's liking or around cultural connection.

Connecting to the Sense of Togetherness, Home, and Family

Food can be healing in the sense of bringing people together and making memories with them, such as daily practices learnt from parents (e.g. coffee breaks, eating together). Yi said, "I would rather cook with someone else and share as a communal practice." For Pearl, food sharing is connecting, "food for me can journey back to my background. It's commitment about family...there's a kind of different joy you have...To me, food has a lot more relation-meaning, rather than taking it into your body."

Zafiro grew up with this practice of eating together and she observed how deeply connected her life, thoughts, desires, and joy are to the experiences with food:

My mom always said that we had to be sitting at the table [for] all three meals, breakfast, lunch, and dinner. So it was a very important part of the family dynamic, just sitting at the table eating together [for] each meal... It's like this ritual of bringing the family together and taking time to check on each other. I really like food. I love food. It makes me so happy. It's something I'm always thinking about, like what I'm gonna eat, when I'm gonna prepare. Where are we gonna go? If we go on vacation, or things I'm craving from Mexico, or things I'm just craving to just experiment new things with food. I would say that 50%, maybe 30% of what I'm thinking about involves food. And I believe it has a very important part in my life.

So these are tostadas and the ingredients that Laura [prepared] for me, and the chicken that's in the red pot. That was a chicken that she made one day before, because it's also a dish on its own...Those beans were brought from Mexico. My mom brought me tons of bags of those beans that are from my hometown. They have this corn, and they're so delicious. And then the tostadas, which are in the red bag—the good thing is that those are really good, and we can buy them here in Kensington Market... And those are from Laura's state, which are a little bit different from my state, but they're good. And there's also salsas at the left [of the photo], like one bottle from my hometown, and the other one that I made. It's a very simple sauce with tomato, onion...oregano, salt—we also bring the

salt from Mexico, cause we don't love it here... The salt from Mexico is from the ocean. And some limons, because of course, you have to have limons...

Figure 28

Zafiro's Tostada Set-Up as Prepared by Laura



Note. Zafiro named Mexico and its ocean and Kensington Market as important sites for her gathering of ingredients.

That's me, in the moment of happiness. That's me, again I was looking at Laura. And I was like, 'Oh, this is the most...' I think eating that first bite

of a tostada it's like heaven. I am not a religious person, but if there was a heaven, this is it.

Figure 29

Zafiro's Bite of Heaven



Note. Zafiro's enjoyment of tostada, as prepared by her wife.

Zafiro's experience of heaven as a non-religious person was through tostadas. Several participants have noted the soul and spiritual part of food that is connecting, and like Mishie, the sacred aspect of food is in people's connection to both the material and abstract—that is to connect to a deep and full sense of pleasure, and to the nostalgia, details in culture, and sense of home.

Zafiro's attention to the sourcing of food was also observed in Yi Shi's reflection about regionality. For Yi, regional food is how they feel close to home and located in the specificities of where their home is and in the celebration of their culture. They notice that other Chinese immigrants come together through these food practices:

There's another town, another city in our province that's very famous for making 粽 [zong] and selling across the country. It's mostly marinated pork belly with egg yolk, which you can get here. But a lot of it comes from Canto region. So, they're adding different things to it, different spices to it. So it doesn't taste exactly the same. Even with the same

ingredients, the seasonings completely different. And some of them put green beans, or mung beans. So it's different [and] also very tasty.

But sometimes, I crave the original just giant 粽 with giant pork bellies, which I can't get here. We can import from the same brand, but they can't import meat here. So it's mostly just wrappings, flavored ones. That's why this time I try to make my own, and I don't like too much salt, too much sugar, so it's easier to modify it when you cook your own, and we had a few failed ones and a few good ones...Once you try making it again... it's not the Dragon Boat festival anymore.

This trial-and-error approach helped Yi feel closer to home, while highlighting the importance to adjust to their personal taste. Another example of this regional specificity is in a sweet xiaolongbao that Yi Shi pointed out in enjoying food with their queer high school friend:

One twist about the xiaolongbao, sometimes we don't realize how many different regional xiaolongbao there are. This one came from a different city that's in a province north to our province. It's so close, but the recipes are so different. Like you still put crab meat, crab seeds, crab eggs, crab rolls on top...but the xiaolongbao itself it super, super sweet....It's interesting to eat something that you thought is your regional food, but even when it's regional, there's even more detail, more different versions of regional. That's a tiny twist in the regional food.

Figure 30*Yi Ordered Sweet Xiaolongbao*

Note. Not pictured here is crab roll and crab meat tofu in soup form, which is another regional dish that Yi tried that day with their friend.

Mishie echoed these observations about regionality and its relation with food that can be lost in the homogenization within North America.

Transnationally...the Chinese food that we cook here in Toronto is already different from the Chinese food that we cook back home. It's adjusted to a Canadian palate with the ingredients available here. Then you move to Detroit and Chicago, and that changes again depending on how developed the Chinese community is. It would be like really 雜碎 [zaap sui; chop suey] style food, or very traditional banquet food. There are different ranges of like Chinese food depending on how much immigration and how many Asian people there are. When I was growing up, it was mostly Cantonese food in Toronto, and now there's different Chinese; Northern, Western, and different areas of Chinese food. Even the idea of Chinese food has really evolved in my lifetime and watching it has been amazing because I'm also learning different palates, because of the different ingredients.

I would hear stories, my dad worked as a as a chef, and my mom worked as a server, and they still do that even till this day. And their hours are bonkers. I mean, the Chinese kitchen itself is a whole other politics and drama and labor exploitation...what I learned about the politics in the kitchen translates to what I would have learned had I grown up. Where my parents grew up, the different politics of the different cultures even within a province. There are different regions of Guangdong—I'm specifically from Guangzhou—like Toisan, Fokkein, different ethnic groups, and local regional languages as well. They might be right next to each other, but there's beef between them.

But when you come to Canada everyone just gets stuck into the same kitchen. They all have to cook the same type of Cantonese food that they may or may not have cooked back home. There's cliques, drama, physical violence, and all these different stereotypes about each other, even though they are from the same country, same province, same area...

Kayleen talked about this sense of home as well:

So depending on the dish or whatever my mood is, [food's] really calming. Either it's reminding me of home, like, I very much miss home or just the sense of family or friendship. Being able to come together and have that warm meal together. Or a cold meal, it doesn't have to be warm, and build those memories together rather than—there's sometimes that you can reminisce. I feel like food is healing because it brings people together.

Sometimes, you're like, 'Oh, family can be a lot,' because my family can be a lot. It's just the memories that you make in those moments, and it could be very healing. It could be even stressful. So. it's kind of like a double edge sword. But, in terms of how it could be healing is that it creates those memories, and sets you up for success in a sense of being able to recognize, 'If I am able to set those boundaries and recognize what my needs are, then those relationships and those connections are going to be stronger than it was.'

For Alexander Mateo, he and his family especially love pork and found joy in enjoying the food and connecting with its meaning:

When it comes to culture, we love our pork meat, and then there's a special way we prepare the meat. It actually makes me remain by my culture, it takes me home, and share in what most people eat. So...make me do things that are a little bit unique and special; different...we're always filled with joy and we can always finish as much as possible. I didn't get tired of eating it because I don't eat every time. It is special. One of the best food that is significant to my family, my culture, my tribe.

Figure 31

Alexander's Preparation of Meat with Pepper



Note. Alexander pointed out that adding peppers and ginger were his favourite way to flavour pork meat.

Alexander's experience of home, family, tribe, and culture was specific in their way of preparing pork meat, which carried a special meaning for him.

SB shared being transported through time and space to the moment of eating with his family in India. He reflected with gratitude on his current belongings:

Whenever I eat food...although I'm eating there alone in U.S.A, my head is kind of there with my parents. In my head, I'm eating with them. It used to be very calming, we used to discuss about what happened, 'How was your day?' ...I enjoyed it...I have that headspace where I was eating with my family. I used to share thoughts with them, as if I was sharing it with them and in my head. And then, I kind of get an answer, or if I ask question to my mom. It's just in my head, but it kind of heals me in a way that I gain a sense of having food every time, it's an activity which you do daily.

It takes you back to your roots because as a family, we were not very rich. When I came to here in U.S.A., it was very luxury, even having hot water from the tap coming out, like, 'Wow, I had no idea.' It kind of takes me back to India where my roots are, even though you're getting luxury, there

are so many people in India who are hungry and it's kind of sad. But it kind of takes me there and then.

For SB, eating can activate a memory of his parents and reminiscing can be a simple but powerful routine to stay connected to his family. I observed in SB's reflections various distinguishers of class—hot water as a luxury, and a domestic worker as affordable enough for a 'not very rich' family. SB's reflections mirrored some of my experiences being homesick and replaying moments of eating together with my mother and sister. Even the mundaneness involved in being able to predict his mother's answers felt like an important recognition that a food routine that is deeply about being together was disrupted in his immigration. His posture towards gratitude appeared multiply across his interview and reflected other participants' appreciation for their surroundings. His reflections about an everyday routine of cooking rice:

Using my figure to measure, a ritual reminiscent of my mom's accurate cooking process...serves as a reminder of my mom, prompting me to call her while cooking or eating. This comforting routine helps me feel relieved and connected to what's happening in India and my hometown, providing a healing process and a sense of closeness to my roots.

Figure 32

SB's Rice Making Process



Note. SB offered some alternatives with the rice making. He noted that the pressure cooker in India was different, and you could add salt, cumin seeds, and butter.

Liz B. selected multiple moments which served as precursors to social events with her friends and loved ones. She reflected on various social aspects and her thoughts on beauty before enjoying the space to speak just Spanish with a new group of her friends:

This is a Mexican place that I went to with a new group of friends. We recently started becoming a little crew. They're all from Mexico, Monterrey, which is where I grew up. They only speak Spanish. Other than my aunt that lives in LA, I never only talk in Spanish to anybody. So, it's nice to hang out with them because it feels like that home of mine, I don't really go back that often. This is a tamarindo drink, I love tamarindo candy. It's again, strong flavor. I didn't order those, I don't even drink that

much, but somebody ordered it for the table, and I was like, ‘Okay, I’ll drink it.’ So, it was nice and a very social thing.

Figure 33

Liz in Company with Tamarindo Drinks



Note. Liz pointed out the tamarindo candy and being among Spanish-speaking friends that invite a sense of home.

I was getting a haircut and going pretty short which I had never done before, and recently, I started wearing my hair the way that it grows on my head. I'm 29 now. [I've been straightening my hair ever since I could], and I'll look at my hair now, and it's so, so curly, and to think I straightened it hurts my heart. So this is to embrace just me, as I am naturally without altering myself. The bad thing is that the haircut place is all the way in Pasadena. I've only gone twice, but both times that we've gone, we've made it a day out of it. I got my haircut, the lady is really sweet. She's my age. It's centered around food because we pick a restaurant after, and this is the precursor to that.

Figure 34

Liz' Pasadena Day Included a Haircut and a Stop for Fried Chicken



Note. Liz shared that the lines were “ridiculously long” on this hot day—her sandwich included sourdough bread and cheddar cheese—it was “perfect.”

Liz B., like other participants remarked on the difficulty of selecting particular photos, and how this set of photos reflected a day that was oriented to different parts of her self, embracing her curly hair, being more emboldened to take on her identity as an artist, and reflecting on her ethnic and racial identity:

It was very reflective...I don't usually sit down and start thinking about myself in those ways. It's nice. I identified some areas where I still want to do more growing in—the art I could be doing more...that I feel I want to keep doing...that'll work out that muscle that I haven't used in a really long time. It was very introspective...for example, the Pasadena day...the bulk of it centered around my ethnic and racial identity, like big themes...my culture is something that I've been thinking about a lot. ...it surprised me—all the emotions that it was bringing up and the emotions that maybe aren't necessarily good emotions. But, it was still nice to feel them in that way, or acknowledge them, let them be there.

Figure 35*Liz's Experience of Her Identity in Art and Pickleball*

Note. Liz contemplated her queer and artistic identity through Keith Haring's exhibit, remembering that spark within her that enjoyed figure drawing models. She shared being an avid pickleballer too and how the game sets up for good company and food.

Liz' Pasadena day involved the reflection of the multitude of her. Her reflections wove through both inner experiences, and social ones that helped her feel connected to home, like speaking just in Spanish with a small group of friends. As she reflected on new changes within her, like embracing her curls, cutting her hair short, and connecting to art, I found that this day she shared with us to be quite intimate—an example of how other participants have reflected on their past, present, and future, and a glimpse into where Liz might be imagining her next step to be in embracing her various identities.

Cultural Connections with Food

It is hard to demarcate social from cultural, especially when these micromoments reveal our interconnections all at once. Mishie's reflections acknowledge the ways in

which our practices can be taken for granted given their normalization; yet they require intentional exploration so we can better understand how we are connected to our cultures and ancestry. Mishie shared, “They're ingrained in our upbringing, and then we internalize it as ‘this is just how we are, how we've grown to be,’ but without acknowledging how special, how deeply connected we are to culture, ancestry, and those ways through food practices.” Alice acknowledged the wonder of this connection, “The joy of eating other people’s and culture’s food!”

For Laura, finding joy is intertwined with understanding histories. Laura echoed this in her daily practice:

I think that what I saw in my food practices was something that I have seen in the rest of my family, which is like this attempt to carry that culture, those practices that are part of our identity...It has taught me a way me to connect with my roots, and my roots are not only in my family, in my hometown, but my friends, like important stages and important people in my life, and I realize that in my practices, I try to remember them, having them there with me, like to bring them to the table with me.

Alexander explained how special occasions bring our histories to the forefront, and how to orient in the now. Alexander resonated:

Food just makes me feel connected with my history. It makes me realize that I come from somewhere, and I still belong today. Just enlighten me more about confirming what my history is all about...Some points we have to eat special things that will make us feel good and then create a special occasion, cook a special meal that will bring us together and then make us feel good because actually, we do it everyday. There is some remembrance... to be attached to [what] you make.

Figure 36*Alexander's Cooking in a Day*

Note. Alexander's cooking involved some homemade pasta, meat omelets, and plantains.

Pearly expanded, “they eat food that [are] particular with some people—they [feel] grateful. They eat food from their origin, down to their culture. Sometimes, they do it in traditional ways. Some people can feel food in those perspectives.” I understood Pearly's ‘feeling food’ as a way in which history is felt, a way in which culture is consumed and felt in the heart. Amadeo echoed this appreciation of connectedness he felt with a Boba shop called #1 Boba Tea, “feeling more connected to my Asian family that's still back in Thailand because it's the similar things that we enjoy and do, even though we're separated by the ocean.”

For SB, food is a way of greeting someone, which can be taken for granted across cultures. He reflected:

In India...every time we greet someone, it's more with food, food is part of everything. So, it kind of gives me hints about everything. Whenever the guests come over at home, we greet them with, 'Hey, this is some tea for you.' I like that part, this is mostly in Hindu culture because the guests are considered as gods. There is a saying, 'Atithi Devo Bhava,' which means, 'Guests are Gods.' Whenever they are over, you take care of them as Gods, so they kind of prepare everything...whenever I get invited—when you're over for a little bit more—you'll see the expressions that you need to leave, but if you go somewhere in India, it's, 'Oh, stay as long as you want. If you want to sleep, it's okay.' It's you, it's the whole culture is 'you.'

Tee experienced their culture through community care with their trans kin:

Other culture, not just Thai culture, this is more a means of taking care of each other, like community care. Because I have a lot of trans friends...we do take care of each other a lot when it comes to, you know, surgeries, for example. Sometimes, we don't have money or sometimes we're just really tired and food is a way to take care of each other. For me, knowing what type of food my friends like is actually really important to me. Like, not just like dietary restriction, but also like, say, my friend just had surgery. What do I cook that he would like?

Connecting to Cultural Values, Such as Resourcefulness

Yi Shi talked about how importance of living according to the seasons, whether it is reflecting tradition in observing celebratory foods, or purchasing food by what is farmed:

We have a smaller community here—we celebrate traditional festivals. Back home, it's like celebrating Halloween and Christmas. Whenever it's two months ahead there'll be all the products putting up on sale everywhere in supermarkets, in grocery stores. Whereas here, it's less celebrated, even with the second generation, a lot of the tradition is lost. So, in a way, I would try to at least buy foods that reflect the season it's in. Buy seasonal groceries, buy seasonal food, buy seasonal or holiday celebratory food like moon cakes, for example, and 粽 [zong], for example, and try also try to learn how to make them, even though at home, I would never make them cause it's so easy to buy such good ones and

fresh ones, artisanal, gourmet. But here...because the resource is more limited, I would try to make my own, which caters towards my palette more.

Buying things seasonally seems like a resourceful approach, and one about observing the natural passage of time as it impacts our land. It feels like a connected spiritual approach to observe culture and celebrations, as well as practical way to move through the year. I am reminded of the connection to indigenous food sovereignty and moving alongside the timing of plants and animals as they move through the seasons too. An Ecclesiastes verse also came to mind as Yi shared their approach to seasonal vegetables, and attending to the rhythms of nature surrounding us, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-3). For seasons dictate a progression in time, and distinct ways to observe the passage of a season.

SB noted within his grocery shopping routines, the importance of “analyzing carefully what ingredients are best, how fresh is the food, comparing with other, stuff so I get the best deal, and also checking the ‘best before date’” as a way to “embrace the traditions that make me who I am.”

Figure 37

SB's Careful Selection of Tomatoes



Note. SB's strategy to selecting the freshest tomatoes involved picking those "tender and not too soft."

Kayleen offered her experiences of resource gathering through an approach to frugality that is less about limited access, and more value for resource itself. Their gamified approach to coupons, discounts, or sales reveal teachings about not wasting, that feel more familial and culturally embedded, watching for "bargain deals, couponing...I find a good deal, let's say, like some sort of meat is on sale, or vegetables, we just buy that and then figure out what we want to do with it. I like to describe it as like being sustainable and frugal at the same time." Taking home leftovers is part of Kayleen's routine:

When I go eat out, I always take it home. Commonly here that I've noticed after moving to Texas, is that when you're done, you're done, you don't have to take it home. Every single time I take something home, they're like, 'Why are you taking it home?' I'm like, 'Well, I'm probably going to eat it later. I don't want to waste food.' That's the underlying thought, 'I

don't want to waste food because growing up, we didn't have much...we're not in a place to throw away money that way.' We're pretty okay right now, but that's still something that I practice.

Another way in which resourcefulness impacted their dish was Kayleen's experience of a delicacy in the States:

[This is] 'Bò Lá Lót.' Back in Vietnam, it's not a delicacy, it's a delicacy here because those leaves are really expensive here. [My grandmother] grew these leaves in the backyard, but in Vietnam, they grow kind of like weeds. It's like a 'poverty food' in Vietnam. They would just go out, cut down a bunch of those herbs and bring it in, and wrap meat inside, this meat mixture inside these leaves, and you would grill them. You would eat it either with bread, noodles, or banh hoi, a rice vermicelli woven bundle, and you eat it with the vegetables. It's supposed to be refreshing. This one is actually stuffed with salmon—cá salmon nướng lá lót...[this] was actually my first time trying this dish because it's a delicacy here...My grandmother was like, 'Yeah, this is what we ate back home. These leaves grew like weeds, so when we didn't have money, this is what we did.'

Figure 38

Kayleen's Bò Lá Lót from Grandmother's Betal Leaf Harvest





Note. Pictured in the first couplet is bò lá lốt and cá salmon nướng lá lốt, and in the second set, the betel leaf harvest from their grandmother’s garden.

One of the quotes I had shared earlier in this dissertation noted the concept of respecting the labour of the farmers, including the fruit gatherers, and transporters who bring food to us. Their reflections on resourcefulness echoed a spiritual and cultural value around appreciating food and how it comes to us.

Celebrations and Marking Special Occasions

Marking special occasions may not seem like an everyday practice. Still, some participants pointed out the “small” celebrations that involve treating themselves with a mindset of self-care. Tee in a previous theme shared their approach to sweets and treats as a small reward as they planned out their week. In this section, participants shared the ways they celebrate special moments with their loved ones.

Celebrations for Kayleen are imbued with meaning. Kayleen reflected on how living in America impacted her cultural practices:

We also do autumn festival, the Moon Festival celebrations. My family also does Christmas, Thanksgiving, but that's like more of like, 'Oh, we get together and we make food, and we eat and socialize.' That's what our thing is because we all get holidays—that's the American influence in my family. At weddings, we have grand feasts. We don't do samplers. Food has been such a huge influence in terms of my culture and my life. It's really hard for me to be like, 'I'm just eating this because I need to.'

SB shared a moment of celebration that happened individually. For him, a type of drink mix can evoke celebratory emotions:

For Holi, we have this drink, which is made out of milk, pistachios, and saffron. ... There is a mix which is sold in the Indian store just for making that drink. So if I want to celebrate, I'll just go and grab that mix and have a feeling, 'Oh, yeah, it's a celebration.' That's how I kind of celebrate with food, the festivals.

Christene frequently spoke about how tradition is differentially inflected by the family's tastes and preferences. I found her explanation of the shared experience of culture mindful of our heterogeneity as well. Christene shared her appreciation in the time and act behind making particular treats to share with loved ones:

Culture is so intrinsically connected to religion for us. Around Christmas time, there's so many different traditional sweets that we make. The tradition is to make huge batches of these sweets and make these little packages, and deliver them to all of your friends and family. Then, leading up to Christmas, you receive like 10 different packages of the same sweets, but made a little bit differently by different families. It's such a beautiful celebration—[it is a] demonstration of community, connectedness, and care. Because the act of making this sweet is time consuming and tedious—hours or even days sometimes—just to give it away. It's that celebration, that connection, that community, the coming together of all of the things that I love about food and culture.

Mishie voiced her experience of extravagance when it came to big celebrations as well as small family get-togethers. She observed her mother's demonstration of love and care for her as most evident in extravagance or foods with lengthy processes:

We all get together and we plan dinners around the celebrations...So our celebrations usually surround us at this big table at home. And this big table hilariously, is this like, you know those big Chinese restaurant banquet style tables? ...My mom somehow, I don't know how brought one of those big giant wooden boards home from work. So, when there's 12 of us at dinner, she will bring it upstairs, and set it up like a whole banquet style, with the whole tablecloth from work to different colors for different celebrations and she will cook a feast, and for Chinese New Year, she will spend an entire week cooking in between work to make like a 盆菜 [poon choi]. That's how we celebrate, that's how we show love. Because I think a lot of what we grow up knowing or like what a lot of Asian households—I could probably say for the restaurant kids—acts of service in those ways. It's like cooking and sharing food is the way we show love and care. Sometimes, the longer time it took, the more love and care it was.

I found it so humorous to imagine Mishie's mother taking in a big giant wooden board from work and storing it in her house—these range from 5 to 6 feet in diameter. Mishie continued:

Mom tries to cook these extravagant meals every time I go home. I went home 2 days ago, and then I cooked for the kids yesterday. There was that duality right there. Every time I go home, my mom tries to make it into a celebration where she has to plan this meal. I go home, maybe every 3 weeks now for dinner. But I guess that's the only time I really get to see them is a dinner every month or every other week. She also makes me go home with a bag of food or bag of soup that she makes, which is what I just had for lunch and like chicken that she makes 白切雞 [baat cheet gai]. She kind of makes into a celebration every time I go home. It's very intentional. As a family, we celebrate a lot with food. We celebrate each other's wins with food. And I think we do that with the kids now, too.

Mishie contemplated her experiences of celebration as informed by her observations of her mother's approach to extravagance and the select practices that she wanted to pass on her partner's kids. The notion of special moments came up multiply in

Alexander Mateo’s interview, as he emphasized the quality of ‘specialness’ and how food was a marker of celebration:

During a special occasion, like birthday parties, we cook some special meals we feel like we’ve not cooked for a very long time. And then, even though we had such meal probably 8 days ago, it still makes me feel good because something is attached to it. We’re at the heart—a lot of people, friends, family...One of the things that bring us together on that occasion is food. Makes, creates, impacts.”

Figure 39

Alexander’s Fish Pepper Soup



Note. Alexander’s fish pepper soup included tilapia fish, pepper soup spices, and ripe plantain. On the right are boiled yams.

In the anticipation of celebration, Laura highlighted her excitement with food planning:

Food has to be in every celebration. In my family, my hometown family, we would celebrate with very big meals. For example, December holidays, or birthday celebrations, or some other religious celebration. I don't practice a religion, but my family is Catholic. I learned that if you want to celebrate, food has to be a very important part of the celebration. It's something that people should be excited about, waiting for the celebration.

Zafiro mentioned her desire to commemorate special occasions with the effort of cooking and enjoyment of a recipe with a story:

Either I cook for others, 'cause I really love cooking for others. Or I go somewhere that I really like the flavors. Or somebody cooks for me. I ask [my wife] if she can cook something special for me...a recipe that's close to my heart in some way—a recipe that has been part of my family, or a recipe that has some type of story.

In their anniversary celebration, Zafiro and Laura marked the occasion with a wine they saved and a special camping trip:

Going camping, I put it as the same moment, because we also did it as part of our 14 year anniversary that week; 7 years of being married. This is the wine that we had at our wedding. Same wine, same year, and we saved a bottle, and we just drank it. That same week of camping. It was very special. And it was a beautiful celebration as well. When we got married, we had a small celebration near the ocean, and 30 of our closest friends and family went with us, and we had a really beautiful weekend with all of them, and we drank this wine. So, it was very special.

Figure 40

Zafiro and Laura's Saved Bottle of Wine for Their 14th Anniversary



Note. In the background of the wine, are Zafiro and Laura's feet, touching.

Saving a 7-year wine to break open for celebration was touching and beautiful to hear. Laura and Zafiro shared excitement in the planning and anticipation of good food for celebrations, as well as their orientation towards food stories to feel more intimately connected to their homes.

With a different intention behind remembrance, Kayleen reflected on the death anniversary of a family member. Kayleen shared the teachings passed on by her grandparents:

Đám Giỗ, is the celebration of the death of someone that has passed away. It's like Dia de los Muertos, but we don't have one specific day. It's either their birthday, or the day they died, but it's pretty much the day that they passed away. It could be friends, it could be family. My family does it pretty often, I grew up with that, and I always thought like, 'Oh, my gosh! They create all these different dishes,' and I get excited because that means I get to eat all these dishes that they made, but I didn't understand

the meaning of it. I understood a little bit of the meaning, but not the true extent of the meaning now...

When we have this festivity, we have a land acknowledgment. On one side of the table, there will be candles, and then candles and incense on the other, and you invite the people previous of that land we are on. The land acknowledgement is like inviting them to come eat with us, and then the other side is like, 'Oh, you invite your family and those that are passed to come eat with us.' When we set up the table, there's bowls, chopsticks or other utensils, and then you're inviting them to come eat with you. After we finish with ceremony, we go eat. We do have different shrines that you also like bow down to during the whole ceremony. Just recognizing and praying.

Kayleen explained the religious and cultural meaning behind their table setting and the significance in the placements:

There's different types of Buddha. Buddha is just basically like a mentor to you—not a deity. That's something that I want to recognize. On these shrines, we also give them offering. Mostly, we give them fruit. So, you can see there's oranges there...

Figure 41

Kayleen's Buddha Shrine



Note. Multiple figures, pictures, and representations of the Buddha grace the mantle.

You have two feasts. One is like salty, which has protein in it. The other, the next day is vegetarian. So, you have a vegetarian day, and also a meat day... You light these candles and incense, you let it burn, and you bow to it and acknowledge people to come and join you to eat. But, before you do this you bow down to the two shrines and do a little prayer like, 'Oh, I hope to wish success or prosperity on my family,' Kind of asking your ancestors for some support in a sense.

Figure 42

Kayleen's Vegetarian Feast



Note. Kayleen paid careful attention to setting up the table with spoons, chopsticks, bowls, candles, and little cups.

This feast is more meant to bring them here, recognize their death, and celebrate them and tell them to join your family and like how you are doing now. Continue life, really. Second shrine, this is your 'family shine.' One side is my grandfather's side, the other side is my grandmother. They have offerings at the shrine and those candles, and like the gold thing in there. They use that for wedding ceremonies as well. My grandfather just puts it there for decoration purposes.

Figure 43*Kayleen's Family Shrine*

Note. Pictured are familial, decorative, and sacred placements to honour Kayleen's paternal and maternal families.

Kayleen's pictures offer an intimate glimpse into the occasions that celebrate the connections we hold with our family and ancestors. Their careful placement of fruit, dishes, incense, shrine, candles, and bowls, reflect the care and attention that SB spoke about in relation to the aesthetic.

Ancestral veneration is a common ritual among East Asian and Southeast Asian cultures (among others) and seeing Kayleen's family's offerings to their past was a profound reminder of how celebrations can continue after our physical presence with each other. When I was living in Hong Kong, my maternal grandmother brought my mother, sister, and I to visit my maternal grandfather's grave on a seasonal basis. My mother did not practice ancestral veneration because of her Christian background, so that cultural practice stopped at her generation. As a child, I remember that to 拜神 [bai sun,

honoring the gods], we visited the gravesite and ashes of my grandfather (and whoever else my grandmother was looking after), brought 燒肉 [siu yuk, crispy roast pork] and 白酒 [bak zao, Chinese grain spirits] to feed him in the afterlife, and burn some 金銀紙 [gam ngan zi, joss paper] so he could spend some money if needed. I would bow thrice in front of the black and white picture of my grandfather, note his suave hairstyle [dan tat tao, egg-tart hairstyle], and look forward to biting into the crispy pork that would be served later (that was my favourite part, sorry grandpa).

My family had a charged conversation about ancestral veneration after my grandmother converted to Christianity and got baptized last year. It was a beautiful and tense moment for our family; my grandmother felt lost about what it meant to remember and care for my grandfather's shrine, as she had been doing dutifully the past four decades, and honour her new religious principles, somewhat informed by the other aunties within her fellowship. Religious and cultural interpretations impact how practices are observed, curtailed, and renewed. My mother encouraged my grandmother to not pay any heed to aunties who were judging her commitment to the practice, and I was not sure that my grandmother felt assured enough by that either. Once a routine centered in the remembrance of my late grandfather made new ways of memory-making and cultural connection for my grandmother.

Table 3.2

Summary of Themes for Historical Memory & Connection

Superordinate Theme	Sub Themes
Historical Memory & Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Carries Material Connection to Ancestry, Land, and the Sacred <i>“I’m made up of all the food I’ve eaten in my life.”—Mishie</i> • Historical Memory Involves Acknowledging Oppression and Rigid Approaches to Tradition <i>“Food keeps our history together.”—Nadia</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colonialism <i>“How does the food get here?”—Laura</i> • Racism and Reducing Stereotypes through Cultural Representation <i>“I became a food ambassador.”—Tee</i> • Patriarchy and Toxic Masculinity <i>“She cooks with that kind of care and passion.”—Yi</i> • Transphobia <i>“At the time, I wanted a community enough that I was willing to go along with it.”—Tee</i> • Making Memory, Making Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photo-documentation <i>“Oh, this is a beautiful food moment. I wanna capture this.”—Christene</i>

Historical Memory & Connection

“I’m made up of all the food I’ve eaten in my life.”—Mishie

People demonstrate care for one another through food, and cultivate their connection to their histories and families by sharing, retelling, and remaking food

memories. Most participants noted this connection through food that lived within historical memory, whether within their own families or their broader communities.

Food Carries Material Connection to Ancestry, Land, and The Sacred

Indeed, several participants (Alice, Mishie, Laura, Zafiro, Yi Shi, Kayleen) remarked on the importance of connecting ourselves to the land. Throughout their interviews, they brought up traditional Chinese medicinal approaches to understanding our bodily connection to the soil and water, as well as Indigenous perspectives about our relationality with creation, and interconnectedness with animals, plants, and land. Alexander shared a photo of him working with gardening—“it’s a special plant, vegetable.” Kayleen offered a glimpse into their kitchen herbs.

Figure 44

Alexander and Kayleen’s Green Thumbs



Note. Alexander prepared some vegetable sproutlings with his friend and Kayleen snapped a photo of herbs that can be continually grown in her kitchen with water like thai basil and green onions.

Zafiro's reflections on food valued the interconnections between all living things:

I value everything around me in the same way, and I think that we're all connected like people, plants, animals, and everything around me. I do feel that for me, food is—like everything comes together and everything enhances each other, and includes all the flavors that connect with each other so that it brings something new...I'm always trying to understand those connections and understand a little bit more about the things that I don't know about others...there's this connection that if we know how to make it work, it will bring something more beautiful.

For Zafiro, animals and plants have the same value, and honoring the sacred means honoring each element in part of our diet, and finding balance across the whole process of hunting, gathering, care, and preparation

I don't consider myself a vegetarian, because I do believe that animals and plants have the same value, and for me to just eat plants, it would mean that I place more value on plants than animals. I have only hunted once in my life—I hunted an octopus in Mexico, and it was a very profound experience of taking a life in order to eat...I do believe in a deep connection with the things I eat, and how I need to be very thoughtful and grateful for the people who gather the things that I eat, and for the people who hunt, or [raise] the animals, and all of the preparation and how the food gets to me, I'm always thinking about it. I believe that it's all sacred in its own way.

Given the importance of recognizing the process of where food is coming from,

Zafiro shared more about the pictures of preparing ingredients:

It's the first time that I put shrimp on a stick, and Laura was doing a really good job at putting it on the stick. And, it was just to show all of the delicious things going on there, the garlic, the sauce that includes the chili that she roasted at the stove. I think that the fact of preparing your own food and taking the time to [find] ingredients, and respecting everything that's happening around that is important.

Figure 45*Zafiro Observed Laura Preparing Shrimp and the Fire*

Note. Zafiro shared a video of her wife’s process of preparing the shrimp on a stick as well as their camping adventure in celebration of their anniversary.

I found Zafiro’s expression of duty to the sacred important to observe—that sacred is not just about religious or spiritual affiliation (Zafiro is non-religious) but a deep and spiritual honouring to care for all the creations and people who give their energy and resources and self to feed us. Laura echoed this sentiment of needing to know where food comes from and the respect within the process:

In terms of the ingredients, where they come from. I know that for animal-related ingredients, there's a lot going on in the animal industry, the meat industry, a lot of cruelty...I live in a very small town. My brother has a farm with pigs, and he cares a lot about his animals. He's very compassionate, and that's the environment that I lived in when I was growing up. I participated in the food preparation: killing the chicken and preparing the chicken to eat it. That helped me to develop respect for the ingredients, mostly when they come from birds, mammals, sea animals, or

even insects. We eat a lot of insects in Mexico. I know about the cruelty in the industry, but I like to acknowledge that I am also an animal, and that I eat meat.

I feel that plants are living beings, and we just don't understand how they suffer when we eat them. I like to be thankful to the ingredients and the living beings that I am eating, that's sometimes difficult to acknowledge, but at the same time it's a reality. I am eating a living being, and I am not always fully aware of how this living being was killed or produced. That's something that's sometimes disturbing to think about.

But I like to acknowledge it, also about the negative impact. Even when enjoying, it's a mix of feelings. And I feel that's also very Mexican in a way, we are aware of the pain and joy at the same time, like how they coexist. Pride and guilt, this coexistence.

The mixture of feelings that Laura shared reminded me of participants' reflections on healing, that they sometimes involve confrontation and reflection on their journey, and still intentionally moving forward. Laura and Zafiro's unflinching approach to the death involved for animals and the cruelty that is rampant in the agricultural-farming complex reminded me of the importance to think about care, ethics, and the sacred, and how indigenous approaches to food sovereignty can help us restore our relationality with the land we live on.

For Mishie, she remarked on the connection to soil and land as a way to better understand our body, "how we nourish body is related to the soil that our bodies derive from." In her interview, she reflected on many things she has learnt about her body's reaction to her surroundings:

Food has been part of my life in a way where I am a diasporic Asian person in Canada, and I do really believe that how we nourish our body is also really related to the soil that our bodies derive from...And the water...Canada, is a very sterile country...I feel like my gut bacteria, my flora has developed in this environment, and it's really changed how my body is able to react when I go to another country. Even when I went home to visit my grandparents every year. I think my body is physically

changed; gut bacteria, flora, because of the food I've consumed growing up. My body has learned to adapt to certain palates.

What I learned from the Chinese food and the Cantonese food that I love making is that there are different bodies and the different bodies have different energies and different heats and coldness and dampness. When some people say, 'Oh, Chinese medicine just doesn't work for me.' I think there are multi levels of our bodies learning. My body was born a certain way with certain heat levels. But then also, it's impacted by the food that my body has eaten through the years.

Someone who has not eaten a palette of energies as in Chinese cuisine growing up, Chinese medicine might not work for them because gut bacteria is different. Flora is different. How your body functions is different.

This traditional Chinese knowledge about our bodies being connected to the soil, water, and food energies, feels interconnected to indigenous approaches to our relationality with creation. I found it difficult to come back to traditional healing practices because of how I have been taught that Western (nutritional) science is superior, empirical, and validated. Even though I have continued to learn about how different fermentation processes come in numerous East Asian dishes and ingredients (miso, kimchi, soy sauce), and the ways they can help with gut bacteria and flora, I find myself still suspicious of Chinese medicinal approaches to address inflammation in the body. Decolonizing myself is still a process.

Mishie continued explaining how connecting to food was also spiritually connecting to her ancestors:

[It's] spiritual in a way that there's a lot of knowledge to be held in food practices. It's very hard — as a diasporic [person] born outside of where our origins are — to be able to hold some of those food practices. I really appreciate the advent of social media, and Covid, too in a way where unfortunately, a lot of people working in Chinese kitchens in Canada, the States lost their jobs, or had to look for other means...so, there's a lot more social media accounts on Chinese food cooking.

And it's really driving that ancestral cooking and knowledge forward that would otherwise be inaccessible, because, although I can speak Cantonese very well, I don't read very well, nor would I be able to search things up, in like, say, a Chinese website for recipes, or be able to read what those ingredients are. But, I think having access to this knowledge is important spiritually for myself in connection to culture, and ancestors. Even my parents, feeling connected to them through food.

Medicine for Mishie combines multiple approaches and attention to the various knowledges imparted to her; she reflected on using Western and Chinese medicinal approaches both to food and to when she is ill:

There's different things you eat that will make you too 熱氣 [yeet hay, hot air], 濕毒 [sup dok, too damp] or 醋 [cho, too vinegary]. [So, you have] to combat some of these energies. Do I fully understand what those mean? No, I did not growing up, and probably still do not.

But you're told at a young age that if you eat that fried chicken too much or eat too much pizza or eat too many burgers—okay, it's not just Western food—Asian food too can be 熱氣. And you have to drink some 涼茶 [leung cha], which is like a cooling tea, the cooling herbal tea to combat it.

So now, whether I eat Western or Asian food, it's always at the back of my mind—those teachings, and that I will drink 涼茶 to make myself feel better. I don't know. I also think that you have to be used to it. If a person's never drank 涼茶 before, they might think, 'Oh, this isn't helpful,' because their gut flora is different and how their body functions is different...Not scientific, probably not. But, I still hold those knowledges. So, it's healing that way.

It's funny, because whenever I get sick or I have like a cold, I will eat my Chinese food, my Chinese medicine, and my Western medicine to cover all fronts. It's probably not what those types of knowledge are teaching you, but I will do all of it to cover my bases like I will have my Advil or Tylenol complete with my 涼茶. I call these 熱氣 pills. In Cantonese, it's called 牛黃解毒丸 [gnau wong gai duk jyun]. It translates to like “anti-poison pills” And it's for 熱氣 in Chinese medicine, some colds come from 熱氣 or 無氣 [mo hay; tiredness energy]. I will take all my medication and eat all the food, the nourishing Western foods, and the nourishing Chinese food to cover all my bases. I just integrate them.”

I felt glad that Mishie brought up Traditional Chinese Medicine alongside western knowledges. Even in the remark about whether it was scientific or not, she pointed out the ways in which this knowledge had been passed by her parents and surrounding culture on common antidotes to everyday illnesses and experiences of 毒, poison. I do not fully understand the concepts either, but as Christene has mentioned about the use of ginger, turmeric, and milk as a common teaching passed on from her family, so too are these medicinal approaches to healing that are devalued and branded as unscientific until proven through western medicine. Plant medicine is a longstanding traditional knowledge, that is also shared in other indigenous and cultural understandings of healing. The more I learn about nutrition, and the varied nutrients provided by what we consume, I see the nuggets of truth on how we are impacted by our diets, by the methods of cooking, by the harvest, by the ingredients themselves, by the farming, and by the water, soil, and pesticides that can also be part of the process. My internalized racism was expressed in my resistance and annoyance growing up, weary of these concepts of 熱氣 to explain all my maladies like canker sores, headaches, acne, and fatigue. Like Mishie, I share a sentiment of trying to “cover all my bases.” At the very least, I can show a return to appreciation for the knowledges that my ancestors have had. In better understanding the origins of those knowledges, it has helped me appreciate what my body is responsive to, and why others might be responding differentially to medicine with their framework of healing.

For Yi, they similarly reflected on how their palate and stomach had been cultivated by the produce of their region:

I'm not a vegetarian, I'm not a vegan. But growing up, we did eat a lot more vegetables than meat. I think it's only because our region is in the

South, so there's always an ample amount of vegetables grown locally and grown in backyards. So, it's easier to harvest. I know that Northern people usually eat less vegetables just because they can't really grow much vegetables there...

Growing up, I feel like my digestive system is more accustomed to eating more veggies, [particularly the leafy ones], which is a huge change coming here, and then also seeing vegans. I respect all vegetarian and vegan's choices, but when it goes too extreme, it feels like a product of late consumerism. So, they have to be to be very extreme to fight back...

I value all kinds of food. I also started learning like years ago to start learning cooking not just Chinese food, so I can get a taste of all the other cultures' food. But I make it really badly...I also try to go out and eat authentic food from other cultures. As long as my stomach can tolerate that, it's really great to be in Toronto, where [it's] not just one palate. There are so many different food palates going on.

Yi Shi's appreciation for all kinds of food, including the leafy vegetables, showcases their openness to expanding their palate and their gut's receptivity to other foods. This concept of expanding palate incrementally involves understanding how one's palate is cultivated in the things they are surrounded with, and how being in a multicultural space, such as Toronto, can be a way to understand other palates.

For Yi Shi, they reflected on the specificities of regionality/land/cuisine, and how locality is an important dimension to food. They spoke about having to adapt to what is grown or imported to land, even when in a metro area.

I could find some of the regional food in sealed packages, like those [marinated] veggies—already cooked veggies sealed in vacuum packages—which is pretty cool. A lot of fresh vegetables that that were grown in our region are not really available here. I don't really get to see...water chestnut, for example, but different types of water chestnuts and different types of water bamboos, or even just looking for a variety of bamboo shoots—it's really hard to find here and super expensive, too. It's the same number with different currencies. But things like that which is very popular in our hometown cooking, too. Now I start to find more pickled food, too, which is great, which we use a lot, and some of them are

imported directly from our province. So it's easier to cook that way. It's just harder to find fresh vegetables.

Yi's observation of "same number with different currencies" is about the produce priced at Chinese Yuan versus Canadian Dollar, which means that whatever vegetable Yi was thinking of can be approximately five times as expensive to purchase in Canada, echoing Kayleen's observation of how costly certain non-native plants may be. Similar to Kayleen's note that some vegetables are harder to find on American soil, there are ways in which people have used canning, pickling, and preservatives to make some of those ingredients accessible in these exports. Throughout their interview, it felt significant to mark the locality and regionality of Yi's favourite vegetables, dishes, condiments, and flavour profiles. Their desire to connect to their experience of home is coloured by what is available on North American soil, even in the most metropolitan of the cities.

Yi Shi elaborated on their pride for their hometown food and the ways in which their palate is demonstrating a bodily knowledge about what sits right with them internally:

I take pride in my hometown food, even though a lot of people from China hates that region, telling us that it doesn't have good food. Like, you gotta taste the vegetable itself. It's not about the spice, it's not about the peppercorn, it's about the ingredients! I'm a big advocate on that, which doesn't really work with the ingredients here...

Hangzhou...the rest of China calls it a food desert, but I don't know growing up I always loved the food. It feels like whenever I eat, even just immigrating here, or I feel like for anybody who leaves their home town to go somewhere else to eat the other food, it feels like, 'Oh, I'm purposely eating some kind of food.' but then, when I'm eating at home, it just feels right. It feels like it is as one with my stomach...it's just me, I'm eating it, so it becomes me. I had that feeling ever since I came out here.

Whenever I eat other regional food or any foods being not cooked at home here outside, it feels like my mouth is trying to change itself towards that kind of taste palate...trying to accommodate different spices. But

whenever I go home and eat, it just feels like it's sitting right within me, and it's becoming a part of me, that feels natural.

Demonstrating both care and appreciation for plant knowledges, Yi Shi's partner brought some beets to aid in Yi Shi's experience of menstrual cramps. The beets were grown from their balcony, Yi Shi explained:

Whenever I get my period and complain about, 'I feel weak. I have cramps. I feel weak because of blood loss.' She'll always look up, she just Googles, 'What's good for period?' and then tells me a bunch of new food that's good for period. She has been telling me for the past two months that, 'Oh, you should eat purple cabbage.' This time, she's like, 'Oh, you should eat more beets cause it helps. It gives you more blood iron stuff.'

Figure 46

Yi's Partner's Beet Harvest



Note. Yi's partner harvested beets from her balcony and brought it over to Yi's place to make sugared or candied beets for salad for added iron in Yi's diet.

While Yi Shi's partner was growing beets on their balcony, Alice shared her experiences of washing the chemicals off plants and growing food, respecting everything

that goes into the meal and understanding where it is from, noting that food is more than the grocery store to dish.

Figure 47

Alice's Preserved Plants



Note. Alice shared that she was washing these plants with chemicals with a friend, to preserve the plants better before they go into the collection bag.

Like Kayleen's grandparents who have a garden in their backyard to grow orchids and betel leaves for a delicacy, Mishie shared with pride about her parents' garden and the ways they make their own compost and collect rainwater. The resourcefulness and attention to the seasonal nature of growing is echoed:

They always grew vegetables. But Covid helped expand their plot...it used to look like an entire forest of different vegetables. You have a mix of like Chinese vegetables, Japanese vegetables, I think there's some like Italian herbs in there...kale...And it looks like they're all a bunch of weeds, but they grow all these different things.

They would have this wooden structure on top, and the melons would grow on top. But, they haven't planted anything new, they just regrow each year now, but when they did intentionally it was very big. They also grow their own organic vegetables.

What is not shown beside this photo are rows and rows of what looks like oil buckets that you get in from Chinese kitchens. They're just these giant buckets. In those buckets, they're collecting rainwater to water these plants. I guess it saves the water bill. My mom used to, in those buckets, try to make her 發酵 [faat how, ferment/compost], her own organics. Instead of throwing it in the green bin, she would compost! There's like 10 buckets lined up there.

Figure 48

Mishie's Parents' Garden



Note. Mishie took a picture of her parents' garden, which hasn't needed replanting over the past couple of years

A few participants spoke about either their own gardening or their caregiver's gardening, and it was inspiring to see the ways they embraced the labour of growing and

tending, to have a more connected way of being with their food. I think about my sister's delight in growing 3 tiny tomatoes a few summers ago (our family does not have a green thumb). My mother would occasionally look at my sister's plant and ask if we could harvest, and how frequently my sister would say no, and talk to their plant, and continue watering, and looking at it for months. I remember savouring her effort, and it helps me better remember the multitude of farmers who toil, and the many living creatures who make my diet possible for me. My prayer before each meal is brief—I thank God for His providence, as gifted in His creations and in the labour of His peoples, and I ask the food to be blessed to the body, for all accompanying me to eat.

Acknowledging Oppression and Rigid Approaches to Tradition

“Food keeps our history together.” –Nadia

Participants offered their reflections on how systemic oppression, colonialism, capitalism, cissexism, patriarchal values, and racism impacted their experience of food in relation to their own bodies, and in understanding their cultural identity more broadly.

For Amadeo, attending and tuning into his heart, spirituality meant strengthening his connection to his ancestry and resisting a systemic forgetting. Amadeo reflected on his attention to his family recipes with his Italian grandmother and his experiences of learning more about his Thai heritage with his mother—these were intentional areas to contest the assimilatory impositions, and stay rooted in his multiple cultural origins. He shared:

Healing is holistic for me. That means not just going to the doctor or even therapists, but allowing yourself to know yourself and others. Especially trying to reconnect to my cultures. Trying to reconnect to my cultures, keep the parts that I have alive, [and] rejecting the absence of heart...

A big culture in the States is just killing other cultures to make an absence of joy and culture...I think that inherently connecting to ancestry and

ancestral cultures is healing because it's human and it's natural, and the big overarching problem in the United States is that we've it's been normalized to do very unnatural, harmful things to ourselves and others...

That's like a black hole a lot of Americans have, in my opinion—this weird, spiritual black hole...And there's still that hole we're disconnected from our communities and our ancestors, our birthrights, and once you peel back that [vener the States uses to trick] people into not having anything meaningful in their lives, it becomes really clear to me how culture fits in: If you don't have community, you don't have ties to your culture, you don't have much going for you besides working and fitting into the American system.

Colonialism. Several participants (Zafiro, Amadeo, Christene, Laura, Mishie, SB) discussed how colonization has shaped the evolution of a dish and cuisine. As they brought up their understanding of colonization, participants also acknowledged the creation of new food cultures and cuisines. Laura asked, ““How does the food get here?”

Christene reflected on her family and culture’s resilience in the face of colonialism and how that memory of resistance and survival is embedded in the dishes, one of which is sorpotel:

My family is from a place in India called Mangalore, which is a little bit further south than Goa... those two regions [were] colonized twice...by the British...and by the Portuguese. As a result, there was a religious conversion that happened...My family is Catholic. Specifically, Mangalorean food and Goan food is heavily influenced by Portuguese culture...My ancestors were oppressed, marginalized, like they call us the ‘Rice Christians’ because the Portuguese traded rice for conversion... ‘If you come to church, we will give you rice.’ It was a coerced conversion.

One of our most cultural dishes is the dish called sorpotel, which is a curry that is made up of very tiny cubes of the kind of spare parts of pork. It's all of the leftovers that my ancestors had access to because the quality cuts of meat were kept by the Portuguese. Because we didn't have access to refrigeration, it's a very vinegar-heavy dish for preservation. It is a true labor of love. Even now my family will make it with different parts of meat. A couple of times a year on special occasions, we'll sit around at the table and we'll spend hours finely cutting these cuts of pork, and then we let the meat marinate in the vinegar so it adopts that flavor.

It's really beautiful to see how, ancestrally speaking, or if you go back a few generations, a meal that was 'survival' is now a cultural staple that we can honor through recreating some of those practices and coming together as a family to do it. Thinking about food is central to understanding my family's history, understanding what my ancestors have been through, understanding how they came together in community, and also survived.

Christene's assessment of her family's tradition of making sorpotel together offered a strengths-based look to see her ancestors over generations. I appreciated that she spoke about the beauty she noticed within her ancestors—how their resourcefulness enabled a new dish and activity for their families to come together and remember how they moved forward from multiple colonial projects.

The recognition of changed food cultures and what colonization has both wrought and brought was similarly reflected in SB's sharing. He used both the language of invasion and influence when he was reflecting on the use of spices, kebabs, and fish dishes:

I was watching a documentary about how spices came to India, and there were some Portuguese influences who came and invaded Goa. That's how they started growing some kind of spices. And then India was collectively invaded by a lot of British and other Mughal empires, so the food has been influenced. It's a beautiful blend of all the cultures mixed together...[Like] kebabs—we also have kebabs in India, and we were invaded by Mughal empires as well, they came from the Portuguese, so we also kind of have a lot of fish dishes which are kind of similar to them. Once I realized after coming here and meeting people from different countries that we have a lot of things in similar. And then it brings back the history that since we are invaded, but at the same time, they got us the food.

Zafiro similarly spoke about people's attempts to understand their history and how colonization has impacted the blend of cultures they now experience:

Most of the food is also a reflection of the colonization that the country has gone through. Although we still have different dishes that are mostly indigenous space—most of the dishes are this mix between Spain and Mexico...it's like a reflection—it's mirroring this colonization that

happened. It keeps evolving. Right now, food in Mexico keeps evolving as people are finding new ways to understand their past, their present, and their future.

Regardless of social class, all people eat certain things and they enjoy them. For example, tacos, you can see a person who is from a different socioeconomic status eating in the street, and enjoying it just as much as a person who is from a lower socioeconomic status. It's beautiful how that part brings together the society that is, in some ways, broken because of its colonial history. But, I feel that food is one of the things that really makes people come together in the country.

Zafiro's observations of both the brokenness of colonial history and beauty of societal resilience mirrored Christene's reflections on survival that through generations has become a family's labour of love. I found myself trying to understand the balance that participants were trying to bring: the acknowledgement of invasion and the decimation of cultures, coercive practices around culture and religion, and the intensity with which people were trying to come together to resist and survive that brought about resourceful ways to manage their sustenance in face of colonialism. Many dishes carry different levels of historical memory: the cultural, familial, and personal.

When I reflect on a number of Hong Kong style tea-cafes—茶餐廳 [cha caan teng]—I know that it is because of British imperialism and colonialism that shaped the new desire and taste to adjust to the new mix of white folks in the 1950s. As examples, pineapple buns, egg tarts, or Hong Kong milk teas, came from a place of mimicry of English or Western living, although, the adjustments were made more to fit Chinese palates. These 茶餐廳 carry a special place in my heart because of how frequently my family would search for the newest fusion cafés, and evaluate the coffee-tea mixes, beef satay noodles, or runny eggs. I find myself afraid of glossing over how colonialism has wrecked food systems for so many cultures, and tentative in expressing admiration for

generations of people who were trying to make do with a new way of being that could honour their past and help their offspring and generations ahead move forward.

Amadeo further critiqued both capitalism and colonization's impact on food and the way it lived in his daily experiences of grocery shopping. He also voiced how ADHD affected his approach to his food practices:

I'm interested in the movements like anti-diet culture...anti-capitalist and anti-colonial ways of viewing food. I never had food insecurity as a kid, but I was still raised like, 'you have to finish your plate.' It was part of a culture that is about 'obeying or else.' That tends to crop up kind of like an authoritarian style of parenting that I think Asian-American parents get stereotyped as. I've had an interesting journey with food and waste. I think traditional cultures, especially indigenous and pre-Christian cultures have values that are something along the lines of, 'Don't take more than what you need.' 'Don't waste anything,' and that's something that's leaked into how I deal with food. Especially purchasing fresh food.

I can't ethically source it, because I've been pretty broke the past couple of years. I can't [go to the] farmers market [for] my vegetables and things like that. Then, at least when I'm buying them from Walmart, have it conscious in my mind that I have ADHD, I'm in a house where pretty much everybody in my family is neurodivergent in some way. I know very well that if I bulk buy vegetables, and I or we can't see them, they're going to go to waste. So, we'll freeze a lot or be conscious of [not storing] the vegetables in an opaque drawer, because inevitably, we'll forget about them. We've wasted food for no reason. Some of that's practical, some of that is like, 'don't waste money,' but I think for me, a bigger part of it has been like, 'don't waste and try not to hurt or exploit resources.'

Amadeos' thoughts mapped onto Laura's reflections about respect for the resources given and importance of ethical sourcing. He expressed his desire to take an anti-colonial approach to food through ethical sourcing, and acknowledged the financial constraints to support his local farmer's market in the ways he would like. His and his family's neurodivergence also impacted how Amadeo thought through the organization of his refrigerator to live out his values for not wasting precious resources.

Racism and Reducing Stereotypes Through Cultural Representation. Some participants (Kayleen, Tee, Christene) discussed navigation of shame with respect to their cultural foods as part of their racial identity journey. Some expressed pride in taking on an ambassador role to make new meanings and diminish stereotypes. Kayleen reflected:

A lot of the foods that I enjoyed growing up, I didn't eat in public or order in public because I felt a sense of shame...from as young as preschool all the way to college. Being able to meet other people in college and be like, 'Oh, actually, I'm really proud of myself, proud of my culture, and the foods that we have because there is a lot more diversity and recognition of the differences that each culture has.' That's when I started to recognize the importance of maintaining your own culture and self-identity.

Kayleen continued to connect to their experience of sharing other parts of themselves, including their queerness:

During this time, I'm also exploring my sexuality. I wasn't sure, I was really confused. Being able to navigate the intersectionality growing up and the culture of everything makes it really hard...At the end of the day, being able to share a dish together with my partner or future partner, or whatever is the case is something that brings us together and like continues to build these relationships.

Something that I've done especially with my love of cooking and eating out and spending time with people is that when I make something, I tend to like to share with others like, 'Hey, this is part of my culture. I would like you to try because these aren't commonly-[found] things in stores or restaurants.' So, it just expands their palates [so they can] be like, 'Oh, there's more than Pho for Vietnamese cuisine'...it brings more awareness of, 'Hey, this is more to a culture.'

That opens up the door of being able to sit down and try other cultures and build that relationship and that bond. That could be like, 'Oh, that's cool, we do something similar. This is what we call it.' Then, it's kind of like a sharing circle. That's kinda my journey of food and the relationship that I have.

Where Kayleen's sharing food is a way to diminish cultural stereotypes and expand people's cultural palette, Tee and Liz B. also discuss their experiences being cultural

ambassadors. Tee asserted their cultural ambassador duties in the act of snack purchasing for their friend:

My friend was coming to take care of me for a week, so I asked them what kind of snacks they wanted as well. I was kind of determined. This friend, we met in college. They're like very white, kind of like chicken-nugget type of person, if that makes sense. I just got little snacks that I think they might like, rice cakes, rice crackers, stuff like that. Friendly for people who aren't super familiar with Asian snacks. Snacks they might like, but new things that they could try. But it was just a way of, you know, get some things.

Figure 49

Tee's Snack Pantry



Note. Tee's pantry is filled with some savoury and sweet rice crackers and Trader Joes dried mangos.

I chuckled at the 'chicken-nugget type of person' comment—it intimated at a palate that Tee had also said was not necessarily better nor worse, and Tee expressed willingness to cater to Americanized palates, such that their choice for snacks were

‘transition’ snacks that can aid in exploration. I told Tee that I also enjoyed purchasing the rice crackers for my friends (I personally enjoy a savoury flavour, but the sweet ones appeared the most popular and amenable). Tee ended their interview with their pride in being able to share more about their snacks and food:

Especially when I was in Indiana, I became a food ambassador...I alluded to this when I talked about the pantry image of the snack that I shared with my friends who aren't good with Asian food, but I used to hate it a lot. When I first moved into a place where there were not many Asian people, where I lived it was like 85% white. Not a lot of diversity.

So, I used to hate it. Because there were definitely microaggressions, but also at the same time, I felt a little bit privileged to introduce my friends to good food, different food that I enjoy and they might enjoy too. I've taken so many friends to dim sum. I kind of enjoy experiencing the first time again vicariously through them. Living in a more diverse area, I don't have that anymore...looking back, I realized I enjoyed it more than I thought I did.

For Tee, being able to help their friends experience their culture was a point of pride, particularly for friends who might not be able to experience other cultures in a predominantly white city. Tee's anecdote reminded me of my first year where I was living in a house of white folks, and I felt excited when one of them who spoke about not liking eggplant was open to trying a Chinese-style stir fried eggplant and appeared to enjoy it. Like Tee, there were ‘definitely microaggressions,’ but I still fondly remember what it felt like to be even a teensy successful in helping them understand and appreciate what I loved about my food and expand their palates a touch more.

Christene's articulation of the concept of ‘health’—especially the broccoli and rice combo that Yi had mentioned trending in China—illustrates how Western notions of health are broadcasted and accepted as the standard. Christene shared:

Over the years, and especially moving to the West, I've contended a little bit because there's a lot of mixed messages in the West about food. There's

a lot of reasons or opportunities to have contentious relationships with food or to not want to eat certain foods. Obviously, growing up and not wanting to take cultural foods to school, but also growing up in diet culture, and considering your cultural foods as unhealthy, wanting to do broccoli and rice, instead of eating your cultural food. I think for me, food has become more comfortable as an expression of love, as an expression of community, and embracing that for me.

Her earlier reflections of what is and feels healthy involves a cultural and spiritual component of connection. I think about how Chinese food is often talked about in terms of ‘too oily’ and ‘too much MSG’ (MSG syndrome has been debunked), and the ways in which orientalism continues to shape how we perceive healthy foods and superfoods, and remarket and rebrand them to cater to white health brands here.

Mishie’s conceptualization of food as a cultural contact point for knowing herself and others, has been a common understanding among participants who speak about their desire to know other cultures and expand their own palates. Mishie continued to share what food and caring meant to her as a diasporic Asian:

This goes back to being diasporic. Food is a very important part of my life, it really grounds me. I don't miss meals, and I will take time to make my food and I like every meal that I eat. That's really important to me, because it's nourishing to my body. It's how I take care of myself. It's how I take care of others. It's very easy to lose a lot of food practices if you don't intentionally go chasing and finding them. It's very easy to. Toronto is amazing, maybe the biggest city in Canada, but there's a lot of different food. So, food is a way where I can explore my palate, expand my understanding of others, and share food amongst friends who may or may not be Cantonese.

For multiple participants, healing the disconnect that can happen with diaspora occurs through strengthening their sense of origin and connecting to cultural foods.

Patriarchy and Toxic Masculinity. Among the ambivalence felt around families and food, Nadia recognized the dialectic of fond family memories and strained relationships. She shared:

[Food] reminds me of my family a lot, even if when [we're] not in really good terms. It reminds me of the times where we used to live together, and be happy, be grateful for the little things because growing up, we didn't have much, but whatever we had we were able to share, so food to me brings back those memories.

Also related to strained familial relationships, Amadeo reflected on how he came to learn his cooking skills:

My grandmother physically taught me a lot because [she taught me] baking. I learned to bake way before I learned how to cook because I didn't have a mom who trusted me in the kitchen. My dad was the first person who taught me how to fry an egg and make breakfast foods...My mom wasn't home and he realized if he taught me then it would widen his options of who he could tell to go make breakfast. And as a young child, I was like, 'this is so cool.'

Zafiro was taught a gendered approach to food tasks, and while she learnt the majority of cooking from women, she intimated at the conflict with her own values and enjoyment of cooking:

I feel that food has also been a way for me to heal and connect with the generations of women in my life...As a lesbian, and having to really understand how to break many gender norms that were imposed to me since little, I think that food was one of the only things that really made me connect with women in my life. Because all of the others, I didn't understand many of the things that they chose, but food was a way to connect with them, and I'm very grateful to have that connection and understand that there's a way to connect with them, and that my generations are living through me in different ways.

Still, food formed connection to family even when such relationships were difficult for Zafiro. Food appeared to connect her to generations of women in her life. She said more about the difficulty:

I see my mom and my grandmothers as very strong women. Regardless, there were a lot of gender norms that they had to follow. For example, cooking for everyone. They also [did] it because they love to do it, not only because it was like something imposed, but also because of love towards the people around them...

I remember that one of the things I hated the most when growing up was when my mom was telling me, ‘Oh, you should serve dinner to your dad,’ and I was like, ‘He has two hands. He can go to the kitchen. Why should I serve him?’ Why should food be a reflection of all of these very patriarchal ways of thinking about women? I still think that he can go and grab his dinner by himself.

But at the same time, I feel it's also the understanding that food can be a reflection of love. It all depends on how you frame it and how you say it. I want to have children, and I want to teach them that food is a way of showing love. But without dragging the things that I don't agree with around food.

Ultimately, Zafiro seemed to take away the lesson of love that was embedded in these practices—that the approach of care and more egalitarian approach to serving food is something she would want to impart to her children.

SB’s closeness with his mother appeared to be a buffering factor in his observations of patriarchal standards on who was allowed to do the cooking. SB reflected on where he learnt to cook and remarked on how patriarchy influenced his opportunities to learn:

I did not know how to cook back in India, but also in India, at least the place where I'm from, there's still a majority [with] women [cooking]. Men [do] not. If a man cooks, then they're made fun of or looked down upon. But I always used to go to kitchen and talk to my mom because I'm very connected to my mom. She used to make chapati, which are round, flat breads, roti we call it. It's very hard to make it a perfect circle and everyday, my mom used to make it a perfect circle. And then I was like, ‘Wow, how can you make it?’ I learned from her, but I could never achieve her kind of thing.

His memories of and connections to her were what kept him through the trial and error involved in working on his chapatis. Christene observed the differential expectations of learning how to cook between her and her brother, and how her mother openly offered her wisdom to her children regardless of who was asking for it.

Yi Shi reflected on the role of masculinity in how they learnt about cooking from their parents:

[My teacher is] mostly my dad even though I didn't really learn directly from him. Growing up, I saw his way of flipping the wok and everything. He used to teach me, or he used to boast to me about how good this wok is, and how much he improvises in cooking, and how much everybody loves his cooking...I remember in elementary school, too, he used to host dinner parties for me and my elementary school friends just to show off his cooking, which is pretty interesting. The fact that usually it's women cooking at home, but in our household it's always my dad, even though still being the 'big man' he is.

The closest translation to 'big man'—大男人 [dai naam jyun]—is through the concept of machismo and masculine pride. Yi's depiction of their father's talent is imbued with a pride around showing off, and sometimes showing over their mother:

I learnt something from it, at least my mom has a much more tender way of cooking. She is usually shy about cooking, cause my dad is usually in a big man, 'I know how to cook,' and then talking down [to] her. But where she's cooking alone, without my dad's help, or without my dad's overlooking—'helicopter'—her cooking is great, not gonna lie. It's maybe more normal...like my dad is great.

But it's really nice to see my mom cook, because she cooks with that kind of care and passion, not from not wanting to boast about her cooking, like my dad. It comes from, 'I want to care for my kid. I want to go find a freshest grocery for my kids, for my family,' which is really sweet. So now, whenever I cook for myself, I kinda think of my mom when she tries to take care of me...and cook fresh food every day. And then I tear up a little bit, thinking that I should care for myself and my loved ones, just like my mom does.

For Yi, there is a healing component of cooking. Yi Shi internalized their mother's cooking philosophy rather than their father's fancy cooking style. Maybe linked to Yi's own values, learning technique and heart together resides in how they express themselves: where does the intention come behind cooking, and how is it displayed in the tenderness, technique, and nourishment of the food. Zafiro's and Yi's attention to the

caring component behind the layers of patriarchal influence in the techniques they learnt and domestic expectations, carried the wisdom of reflecting, confronting, and moving forward in ways that made sense for them.

Connecting with personal, familial, and cultural histories might activate feelings of ambivalence; nonetheless, it is important to attend to where we come from and our past, to set course for new meaning making. Various participants reckoned with the ways food is coloured by patriarchy and colonialism, both loving traditions around food and stepping away from the disempowering messages. In this next subtheme, Tee recounted their journey of re-appropriating recipes from maternal figures and communities who have not supported them.

Transphobia. Tee's historical memory and connection with food appeared ambivalent given their parents' history of feeding, eating, and support for them. Tee narrated how they repurposed recipes from unaffirming parental figures to caring for their communities. Tee disclosed:

It's a baked potato black bean chili recipe. I put this specific dish just because it's kind of a complicated history for me. I didn't grow up eating chili. A lot of people have strong opinions about chili, I don't. I'm like, 'Whatever, it's fine.' But this recipe, I got from a church lady. When I was in grad school and sort of religious, like Christian, evangelical, borderline fundamentalist, so not very affirming of any queer identities to put it mildly.

Figure 50

Tee's Black Bean Chili Recipe from a Church Lady



Note. One of the recipes Tee repurposed for themselves among unaffirming religious figures and contexts.

But this church lady, we went to a potluck after church, when I just moved to Indiana and joined the campus ministry, and she invited all the students to her home and cooked for us, and this is one of the dishes that she cooked, so I asked her for the recipe, and she gave it to me, and so I cook it every so often. Chili isn't something I eat a lot. I don't eat a lot of American food mostly these days.

I took this recipe because it's easy to do for meal prep. And I cooked it last time for surgery and it worked really well. This church lady, I hadn't talked to her since I stopped going to the campus ministry, and I deconstructed from a lot of the teachings before. Even when I went to her house—it was kind of weird situation—I was openly queer, but no one really talked about it, or kind of [hoped] it would go away. At the time, I wanted a community enough that I was willing to go along with it.

I don't talk to people from that church anymore. I kind of left after, it's kind of the path. It's a little bit ironic, but the person, I appreciate her kindness, but also she would not have approved of my surgery, you know, it being a gender affirming surgery among others. At the same time feeling a little bit ironic that I'm using her recipe for this. But the food is so good.

Tee was willing to be a part of community that was not affirming, because there is food in community and community in food. Tee's ambivalence about going to an "evangelical, borderline fundamentalist" church and campus ministry held their want for community, and trepidations about sharing more of themselves because of the implicit disapproval from church messaging. Seeing Tee repurpose the recipe while holding both this church lady's kindness and judgements, felt true to their overall approach to complicated food histories. For Tee, this black bean chili was easy to prepare and enjoyable, and eaten with the history of the person's kindness and disapproval. Tee's regular involvement in church potluck in Indiana, demonstrated a deep desire to find community. Their story recalled my attendance to a Chinese Baptist church for a few weeks, especially for their monthly potluck because it was the only good, home-cooked Chinese food I enjoyed in Logan. I found it difficult to connect with a mostly Mandarin-speaking congregation. Even in trying to build a bond with the pastor's daughter whose kindness was touching (she helped me orient to Logan and introduced me to a decent dim sum place in Salt Lake City), I remembered my silence when there were questions around my partner and my own judgements about the Intelligent Design curriculum in their children's Sunday School. Like Tee voiced, the food was so good indeed.

Tee shared another story of reclaiming food in face of loss, disappointment, and rejection—supporting their friend's surgery while making their mother's green curry.

They rewrote their sense of care and comfort from the recipe for themselves, while remembering their estrangement from their mother.

The one on the right is the classic type, green curry. This is actually my mom's recipe. My mom and I, it's a similar theme from the previous one too, because my mom and I are estranged. She's not affirming at all, and she didn't even know about the surgery, but I kind of co-opted that recipe for myself in order to take care of myself, even though the person who taught me the recipe was kind of the opposite of that. Contrast to that, the reason I had the breakfast muffins...it's actually kind of funny, this is one of the experiments I tried after omelet and my aunt was someone who taught me that. She is one of the most supportive people in my family. It kind of contrasts to the green curry. They have different history, but both could be a way to nourish myself and take care of my body.

Figure 51

Tee Experimented with Mother's Green Curry and Aunt's Breakfast Muffins



Note. Tee's aunt suggested using eggs within breakfast muffins to see it could help with Tee's journey in consuming eggs again.

Tee's humour in juxtaposing recipes from two maternal figures who took different stances towards their gender exposed the complexity and work Tee did in their journey to reorient themselves to the nourishment within food per se and rewrite a meaningful approach to care. Tee's ability to eat eggs more comfortably because of their aunt's creativity and their openness to try once again is a testament to their sense of exploration, adventure, and perseverance in their path towards healing. Not everybody could nor should reappropriate recipes—Tee's story highlighted their intention to care for themselves and others that was central to their ability to re-engage in foods that held difficult and traumatic meanings.

They demonstrated creativity and vulnerability to invite others in, show love and support, and care, remembering and moving away from transphobic experiences of silence, erasure, and lack of support. Tee's conceptualization of food as a universal language of care was a guiding foundation for their cooption of these recipes.

Making Memory, Making Knowledges.

“For some reason, like every meal that I eat, it's important that I take a photo.” —Mishie

Participants reflected on their memories about food, who their teachers were, and how they recreated memories: keeping memory, retelling food stories, activating bodily memory around food, creating conversations to gain knowledge, and archiving for posterity. Mishie summarized this impulse to archive—some participants explicitly described knowing intrinsically that food is valuable to them, and the documentation process gave space for them to evaluate their relationship with food and understand food's meaning with exploration.

Kayleen's relationship with food has been developed with her strong bond with her grandparents and festivities they celebrated. Kayleen explained how her main food teacher was her grandmother:

She's teaching her knowledge and things that she grew up with to pass it on. I thought that was very impactful in terms of how food has developed to me is [through] relationships. Such an influence is common with my family...it has impacted my other identities as well just because if they did not celebrate these festivities or [teach] me these things, then I wouldn't have a good relationship with food.

Passing on tradition to remember loved ones is also something that Kayleen's grandparents imparted:

I chose these two [photos] because first of all, the celebration, the feast, that one was more of like what I grew up with...I just know it's like, 'It's someone's birthday,' or someone that is dead—my great-grandparents are dead—or something like that, so we get to eat today. I always look forward to those days and then now I'm like, 'Oh, it's kind of sad,' but also, it's empowering to know that this is something that is passed on from generation to generation. What tore me up was when we did that feast, my grandfather was like, 'I am teaching you these things, and I hope when I pass, you can do it for me.' And I was like, 'Oh, it makes me almost cry every single time.'

Figure 52*Kayleen's First Feast*

Note. Two different angles of the first day of feasting, which involved meat.

Zafiro shared her experience of remembrance through Dia de los Muertos, “in Mexico, food is really, really, really, really important. Not only in the daily life of the people, but also— one of my favorite holidays that we celebrate is the Day of the Dead, and it's focused on food and remembering our past generations and the people who we loved through food.” Zafiro noted the ways that she was taught from an early age to help in the kitchen and who her different teachers were:

Since a very early age, I think 3 or 4, [my mother] would [have] me separate the beans—the good ones from the ones that were not, or the rice. And then she would take me with her and say, ‘Oh, here's how you warm up a tortilla,’ or ‘Here's how you make a quesadilla.’ From a very, very young age, [and with] very simple tasks. Sometimes, I thought that it was a little bit dangerous. I was like very little, but she would still take me to the stove, [with an open flame], and that was so beautiful. I miss that a lot here in Canada, cause we don't have fire stoves where I live...

My dad was always showing me how to choose the freshest vegetables, the most beautiful fruit, the good ingredients to eat. So he was like, ‘Yeah, if you see that this has these dots, you don't buy it.’ Mostly my father's mother, my grandmother, She would cook a lot. We would go once per week to her house to eat with them, every weekend, and she would cook every Christmas. She knew that I loved to learn about cooking, so she would let me try different flavors and see.

There are some recipes that I know because I remember the flavor and I know what ingredient it's missing because I remember from a very young age, maybe 6 or 7, just helping her cook the Christmas recipe... I had an uncle. He's Peruvian, and he went to Mexico and married one of my dad's sisters. He loves to cook, so also from a very young age, he was teaching me to do different Peruvian dishes.

I studied Japanese... Since I was 4 until I was 15, not only did we learn about language, but also the culture. I also had cooking classes in my Japanese school, and many of my teachers were also my cooking teachers. So I ate Japanese food almost once or twice per week that I cooked, or my mom cooked or my teachers cooked. I would say, mostly those people were my early teachers...

Laura, my wife has also been my teacher in the sense that when we met, and we were going to go and live together 13 years ago she was like, ‘Oh,

I don't know how to cook,' and I was like, ;Oh, well, you're gonna learn because I'm not gonna cook for both of us.' And she was like, 'Oh.' She became a really good cook. She asked her mom for a lot of recipes and she became my teacher in the sense that she was cooking dishes that I've never had before. So, I was also learning from her about how to make certain types of salsa and certain types of - what's the word in English - this paste that you make, and then you rub it into the meat.

Figure 53

Laura Roasted Some Hometown Chiles



Note. Zafiro captured a picture of Laura roasting chile from her hometown a sauce for some friends.

Multiple people taught Zafiro to appreciate a variety of foods, preparation techniques, and use of ingredients for her to develop the skills she has now. For SB, his food experiences, memories, conversations, and affect are tied to memory of a loved one.

He expanded on his reflections about his mother's teachings:

Whenever I do this, it makes me remember this conversation which I had with my mom. I kind of go back. I'm very attached to my mom. So I kind of go back a lot. I used to make rice with no flavor, no salt and everything. But my mom told me that you could add the salt, you could also add

cumin seeds, so kind of a flavor of cumin in it.This takes me back to the conversation which I had with my mom, kind of makes me remind about her, and very soothing just by thinking about her. I feel relaxed, it is kind of like a healing experience, at least for me, because it makes me think about her, our conversation, and her smile. It kind of makes me miss her, and her smile makes me happy.

Food takes SB back to memories of learning how to cook with his mother, and its potential for healing lies in his connection with a loved one.

Another beautiful example of connection is Laura's mother who shared her wisdom about nutrition for breakfast, and this became an important staple for her family, and helped her feel connected to her family who lived in another country:

My mom took a nutrition course a year and a half ago. One of the things she learned was to make a lot of homemade, healthy things. One of them was this protein that's a mixture of like ten seeds. It has chia seeds, flax, sesame, walnuts, almonds, coconut, cacao, oats, and I don't remember the rest. But you grind the same portion - let's say 100 grams of every seed, you grind them, mix them, and you put one spoon in your breakfast. Let's say that you have orange juice you put like one spoon of this, and mix it. Or, what I do is I put one or two spoons in my cereal because I like having cereal in the morning, like cereal with fruit, and I put a bit of oat milk or almond milk, and I put one or two spoons of this.

This is my vitamin, and something important is that I feel that connects me with my mom. And one of my brothers, I have three brothers. Two of my brothers are in my hometown, I live in Toronto. And my other brother lives in a different state in Mexico, Monterrey. He, my mother, and I make this protein, so I feel connected because I know we have the same thing for breakfast. I feel proud of my mom because she took this nutrition course and she's helping us. It brings me a lot of positive feelings.

Figure 54*Laura's Mother's Homemade Vegan Protein*

Note. The nutrition within this seed mix carried essential protein, vitamins, and fats.

New food practices emerge for Laura, and this new breakfast routine helped tap into her nutritional knowledges and experience of familial connectedness. For Amadeo, he reconnected with his mother over boba, and discussed his experience of culture and intimacy through their restaurant visits. Amadeo shared about how much of his cultural learning took place in moments when his mother would take him to Asian American restaurants, and his mother's remarks about what was authentic:

She would take me out to restaurants because she didn't have to cook, and I was like her friend. She couldn't go out to lunch, or she felt like she couldn't, so she would take me. That was a big way that I was educated on Asian-American culture: Being taken out...anywhere but Thai restaurants, which I don't think was done maliciously especially since so many Asian-American restaurants are blended anyway... We were in a Chinese restaurant in one of the casinos in Las Vegas. And my mom was like, 'Oh,

this is a really good place and authentic,' which neither of us was probably expecting. And she'd say little things here and there like, 'Oh, this dish I had growing up. This is how you know it's good.' It's not like a 'white people' Asian-American restaurant.

Amadeo gained knowledge about particular tastes of food that was not appropriated and learned more about his Asian-American culture through these visits. He continued on how memory can be a 'muscle memory,' like how cooking can be encoded into the body:

With cooking, it's a very 'everyday thing.' I have friends who would describe it as, 'once you know that recipe, it's just part of you.' I have quite a few recipes, that even if I don't remember all of the exact quantities of the ingredients, I do have a muscle memory in making it. I don't think there's a lot of other things that I've had, especially culturally wise, that function like that for me.

Amadeo's appreciation for how cultural memory can be encoded into the body, was echoed in Zafiro's experience of her hometown through recipes. Zafiro shared:

I can always connect with my mother and my grandmothers and some people in my family even if I'm away from them by cooking some of their recipes, or if I'm far away or if they passed away, there's a way to connect between boundaries of space and time and cooking recipes that I have learned throughout my life...Bringing or having loved ones bring ingredients from home town or home country enhances the connection to the recipes."

Zafiro continued with the intentionality to connect back to her hometown:

Since I came to Canada—[I've] definitely [been] more intentional in thinking about the dishes that I make from Mexico... But, also, when I moved to the other side of the country, which was like 10 years ago, it also made me realize how Mexico is so huge in every region. It's so particular regarding the food, and it also tells a story of the culture and the people of that region, and for me, it was one of the first shocks of going to live outside my hometown. It was so different, and I miss so many things. That was one of the first times that I really felt like—not even like in the same country, I thought that I was somewhere else, because some of the food was different.

With Zafiro's different teachers, she gained an appreciation, especially over holidays, as she watched her paternal grandmother cook for her family. She recalled, "She knew that I loved to learn about cooking, so she would let me try different flavors and see."

Caregivers are central to teaching historical memory and connection. Mishie detailed her parents' immigration story and her understanding of Chinese regional politics through observations in the kitchen. She conveyed the complexity of diasporic engagement with politics, and how her parents' colleagues had to homogenize and flatten their experience of Chinese cuisine because of the limitations of local ingredients, and cultural access and understanding. She continued to reflect on the restaurant business itself as a backdrop to many of her cultural knowledges about the diversity of Chinese people, and how integral it was to her family's survival in a new country. Mishie confronted unflinchingly the violence and exploitation that comes with a story of survival, and how unlearning a survival mentality is connected to appreciation of her grit.

Mishie shared:

My parents had a very turbulent immigration story. They didn't work in restaurants before. They didn't really cook before. But coming here, as in many Chinese immigrants coming to the US or Canada without knowing the English language, a lot of them worked in Chinatowns. My parents initially came to Vancouver and they worked in Vancouver Chinatown. Then moved to Toronto and worked in Toronto, Chinatown, and then Ottawa. Eventually, I was conceived and born. My dad, in my early childhood, worked in Chicago Chinatown and Detroit Chinatown. I was very much like a 'mobile restaurant kid' growing up. Not a restaurant kid, where my parents owned a restaurant, [I moved] to Detroit and Chicago... wherever my parents could get jobs. So, food has been a very important part of my cultural upbringing because I was immersed in it...

I didn't get to see them a lot growing up because they had to work 60-80 hour work weeks. We saw us bounce a lot in different homes where people could take care of me because we didn't have any family here. So, it's very immigration-survival mentality. I did really value our weekly dinners together. There are time periods where I would only see them on

Wednesday nights for dinner, and then I'd go back to wherever I stayed. I remember those stories they told me at dinner about work. That's how I learned a lot, culturally about what they're going through. At these dinners, they would usually cook...going out was pretty infrequent back then.

Food was a way of how they survived in a country where they didn't know the language, and still don't know the language now...even 30 plus years later. Food is the way they nourished me, but also [how] they shared what they were going through. Obviously they didn't tell me the bulk of it—the physical violence stuff I learned post 18., They would tell me about the drama, or I would go into the kitchen, where my dad worked in and hear screaming all the time. The kitchen is really loud. It's not like they're trying all to be very angry people, although Cantonese does sound like a very choppy, loud language. It's just because the fans are so loud, and it's constantly, like 40 degrees [Celsius] in there. That's just the conditions they work in. They're just naturally louder, aggressive sounding people because they're hot and under those conditions. I learned a lot being immersed in different food practices and watching them.

Mishie contextualized her parents' work against a longer history of labour exploitation of migrant workers and increased barriers for non-English speakers. Mishie both acknowledged her parents' stressful work conditions and how it impacted her frequency of family dinners and moving across multiple homes.

For Christene, the memory of home is inseparable with some of the food teachings—oral history, food preparation, being in the kitchen with her mother and brother. Kayleen similarly spoke about food conveying memory, not just steps within a recipe. Christene explained her experience of 'clinging' onto tradition as a way to strengthen her cultural roots,, especially being more removed from her extended community, and what the Christmas tradition of making the sweets mean for her:

When it comes to celebration, to me...especially being removed from my ancestors, from my extended family—I am someone who really desires and wants to cling to tradition. I'd always say to my family, 'I really value and love the aspects of food that are connected to celebration and tradition.'

At Easter and at Christmas, we're gonna sit down and make [this dish], we're gonna spend a couple of hours—this tradition to me, although it's tedious, and sometimes, 'Oh my God, we're doing this again'—it's meaningful, this connection. Once a year we're gonna make the spices, knowing that at Christmas time, one of the most beautiful traditions in my mind is because religion was forced on our community...culture is so intrinsically connected to religion for us.

Christene observed that her mother passed down knowledge in her family orally:

[My mother] has become the keeper of cultural knowledge, and this unwritten orally translated knowledge—her profession is also a teacher. I think that it's been really beautiful to see her embrace both of those roles because, traditionally speaking, translation of knowledge around food is more gendered in South Asian culture. Typically, it's mother to daughter. But, my mom has been awesome at looping my brother into this.

We have these family conversations over these moments where she's making her biryani, or she's making sorpotel, or we're making the Garam Masala. It really is that continuation of oral translation like, 'Okay, we're sitting down. This is why we do this much of this, or why we cut it in this way, or why we do this tradition.' This is who in our family taught her that, or where that knowledge came from...In her teaching, I always ask her to write things down, especially now that my brother and I don't live at home, for that opportunity to recreate it in our own homes.

I think that coming back, in a more traditional sense of learning through observing, learning through listening, learning through 'doing with.' She's definitely the core teacher of that. It's fun because we get to go off a little bit and experiment and try what we've learned, and then come back and say, 'Oh, that didn't go so well,' and have that dialogue. I think that it's helpful to have someone who is still so connected to that knowledge because I feel like living away from grandparents or away from extended family [allows us to] lose that knowledge or lose that teacher, because I don't get that first hand 'I'll get to watch my grandparents cook,' or I don't get to be surrounded by a community of people who are connected to the knowledge in that way. So, I'm very happy that my mom still embraces and encourages that kind of 'trial and error' way of learning.

Being in the kitchen, trying to follow instructions with trial and error, and engaging conversation and questioning are key parts in Christene's knowledge making. The dialogue plays a role in gathering family members and building their relationships, as

well as helps her build her own approach to cooking. Christene reflected on her navigation throughout this study:

The documentation process and participating in this [study] has been fun because it's been almost an added appreciation for the things that I already intrinsically knew were meaningful to me... There was something even more exciting about like, 'Hey, wait, let me take a picture of this because it feels like a special moment, or it feels like something that I want to talk about and want to share.'

Similar to Christene's mother, Mishie's mother also enjoyed sharing her cooking:

This is my mom's famous sauce. She makes this very special sauce that all my friends who have tried it love. It's her hot pot sauce. And it's basically a take on 蒜蓉 [syun jung; minced garlic and green onion sauce], like sweet soy sauce in there...She does it in this ratio that I can never work out. I bring it to my friends whenever I can.

My friends call this Chinese salsa. It's really cute because they're Mexican. They've shown me a lot of their salsa, and made a lot of salsa for me. So, when I introduce them to hotpot, they loved it, and wanted my mom's recipe because they tried it and called it Chinese salsa, which is really hilarious. I brought them to one of my favorite Chinese grocery stores in the midtown area, and they went off just buying everything. And so now, they do their own hot pot at home. When my hot pot broke, I actually had their pot for like 8 months when they were in Mexico and gave their pot back when they came back. So yeah, that's the story now when I look at that sauce.

Figure 55*Mishie's Mother's Famous Garlic Scallion Sauce*

Note. Otherwise endearingly termed by Mishie's Mexican friends as "Chinese salsa." It comprised shallots, garlic, cilantro, green onions, special seafood sweet soy sauce, sugar, and hot oil on top.

Mishie reflected on how food exists in her everyday and her desire for knowledge to be passed on. Her reflections about keeping intergenerational memory are built on a desire to appreciate and maintain her connection to Cantonese food, language, and knowledges:

Toronto is an amazing place to be exposed to and learn from the different culinary techniques, understand the histories of different cultures and being immersed in— that is beautiful. Which is why I'm terrified to ever move out of this city because I lived in a smaller town in Ontario and the province before, Kingston, did not have access to all these type of foods, and was just very sad, not even to go eat, but even buy ingredients. Food access is very important to me. It's part of my everyday.

It's very easy for the food knowledge to get lost in the diaspora. I know the traditions will continue because there is Guangzhou, there's Hong Kong

and innovations absolutely...We talk about losing language because Cantonese is in some ways a slowly diminishing language, unfortunately, but so is food, and the diaspora. I think it's really important for me to be able to learn from my mom, my dad. A lot of it is online. I'd say I learned so much of it online because there are other Cantonese people now who were restaurant kids who are starting food channels with their parents. 'Made with Lau' specifically, I just cooked one of his recipes last night for my partner and his kids...I see a lot of my friends who lose a lot of food practices, it makes me a bit sad, although I'm not pushy, but I do think it's important that I expose my children, currently and future to these food practices...

Language is a really hard one. It becomes harder for our kids to speak Cantonese because we don't speak it a lot at home. In turn, when we do, it sounds like a secret language to them. My way of keeping the Cantonese connection and to remind us that we are Cantonese people (although speaking English) is that we eat Cantonese food and share food knowledges. The kids love being part of the cooking process. It's just limitations in time and energy that becomes the barrier.

I do not know how I came across a 'Made with Lau' video, but I recall being impressed with the intimacy of this father-son production. Chef Lau would cook, and his son (and his now production staff) would translate language in jyutping (sounded Cantonese), written Chinese, and offer tips and tricks, alongside flute music performed by Chef Lau. Most clips conclude with 5-10 minutes of the family trying the food, eating together, feeding their baby, reminiscing, and answering viewer's questions about their marriage, immigration story, or experiences of their hometown. When I have cooked more traditionally, I used Made with Lau's recipes and felt proud to present dishes that my grandmother would recognize and give a nod of approval.

Photo Documentation is an Aspect of Memory Making. Numerous memories live within our food practices on an individual, familial, and community level. Christene continued her reflection:

It really speaks to how much creating a food together, sharing of food, whether it's our family's cultural food, or whether it's taking each other to

new restaurants, it was over the span of a week. I did all of these things, and it was so fun to even have that thought in my head, ‘Oh, this is a beautiful food moment. I wanna capture this.’ And I typically am the person, ‘phone eats first.’ Let’s take a picture because I like to go back and look and remember, because it’s more than just a memory of what we physically ate and how it tasted, but about the company and the moment, and what that moment was like.

I think it was really fun to have that representation of, ‘Oh, this is not a long period of time, but this is truly what a week in my life looks like’—eating my mom’s food, trying to make something on my own, and seeing how it goes. Making food with friends, going to restaurants with friends. Spending time with people who are also showing love in a similar way, who are cooking for me, or showing their thoughtfulness for me in that way.

For Alexander Mateo, he reflected on the intentionality of sharing his experiences with his friends:

love it because it’s something I can keep for future to show my friends, to show my family. It serves as a good document on the normal basis. When I’m cooking, I don’t take photos, so I feel like it’s something I can keep, it’s part of my memories now. I love it, I find it entertaining, I take the pictures with joy. I asked my friend to help me out. I was with my friends, having a good time together... It makes the documentation feel special and physical because it brings me close to my friends, and then lets me feel special, and then I have time for myself to show our phone...they are the making, intending—we took a lot photos together.

Food documentation is similarly integral to how Mishie remembers her daily and weekly activities, conversations. The photo itself activated her recall and even if it is the same photo, she shared her fondness for the activity itself:

My current partner makes breakfast for me every single morning, and I take a photo of this food every single morning. It doesn’t matter what it looks like. I will take a photo of it every single morning, and I have a couple hundred photos now on my phone because I take it every single morning. Sometimes it just looks like a wrap that doesn’t look like anything, just like a circular thing. But for some reason, every meal that I eat it’s important that I take a photo. Sometimes, there’s like 30 photos of the same plate. You went through my photos. It’s a core part of my everyday. As long as I look back on the food I eat, it brings me a lot of joy that this food nourished me, and that I tasted it.

I do really appreciate the food I eat, and it also reminds me of what I did and what that day is. So whenever someone asks me, 'do you remember, like what we did on that day?' I will because I take photos every single day of the food I eat. If you ask me normally, I don't remember. I can't remember what I did yesterday. But as soon as I see a photo of food, I can recall that day, who I was with, who I shared that food with, what the conversations were, what that day was like and what I did on that day. Maybe that's why. It holds a lot. My day is so centered around food like, 'when can I eat' and 'what I will eat next?' It's really important for me. There's a lot of planning involved each week in terms of what each dinner is gonna be, but also lunches. I think my life is very much planned around food: When I can eat and who I can eat it with.

Probably why I realized when I made a post about my best friend this week, I felt like all the photos I could find with her always food. It looks like all we do together is share food. Maybe I'll have a conversation with her someday about this about why that is and what food means for her. Because clearly, we share this, we do it naturally together, even though we do other things together.

These memories pass oceans, time, offspring, and generations. These memories hold bodily, affective, and spiritual knowledges, and the appreciation for these memories can be passed by continual storytelling. There is a mixture of pain and beauty, grief and joy within these memories, and similarly, they are not always passed with care and attention—sometimes memories can be difficult and food practices can be restrictive and prescribed. Still, participants share their tender approaches and embrace the meaning within some traditions, for ones that help them feel connected to home and their broader ancestry, and for meaning that makes them feel loved. Recipes and routines can be rewritten, over and over again. In our final theme, participants speak about new, hybrid knowledges, which we will better understand through the lens of 'la Mezcla.'

Table 3.3*Summary of Themes for La Mezcla*

Superordinate Theme	Sub Themes
La Mezcla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fusion, Authenticity, and Being 'Culturally Enough' <i>"Food doesn't care for where I am."—Liz</i> • Making New, Adding to Family Tradition <i>"This immigration story in my family...that mix of our roots and our new beginnings."—Laura</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Caregivers as Special Knowledge Keepers <i>"People are finding new ways to understand their past, their present, and their future."—Zafiro</i>

La Mezcla

Building new knowledges comes in a hybridity of understanding our histories as well as forging new own paths. Garcia (2018) conceptualized 'food mestiza consciousness' to think through how we can reterritorialize food place, notions of authenticity, and belonging. This is inspired by Anzaldúa's work on Borderlands and 'la Mezcla' for how we understand mixtures, hybridity, and spaces anew. Participants reflected on the kinds of new knowledges and practices they are making to move forward.

Fusion, Authenticity, and Being 'Culturally Enough'

"Food doesn't care for where I am."—Liz

For Liz B., being 'culturally enough' appeared in her interviews and food offered a place free from judgement about where she was from and if she belonged:

I've always struggled with where I'm from, like my ethnic or racial identity. And I feel like food doesn't care—it's a nice way to engage in

whatever culture...without feeling like I have to fit in a particular box. I can have Cuban food if I want to, Mexican food, or whatever.

Participants reflected on broader cultural questions of belonging through food. Tee asked who is Thai? Who is Thai American? What about multiracial Thai folks? Tee reflected not feeling 'good enough' in relation to their ethnic identity:

Food has taught me about my heritage as well, that's probably a common response that you get from a lot of people, and also we can engage with my heritage. A lot of time people think about authenticity, but at the same time, food has grown beyond. It's really more than what's the most authentic, right? But, how do we adapt it to our culture?...

It's evolving for me. I had this really rigid view of what it means to be authentic Thai, like food. So if it doesn't use this ingredient, I would automatically judge it like, 'Oh, these people don't know what they're doing!' ...I would double check with the pictures and the menu in description to make sure, like, 'Okay, like the pad thai actually has tamarind in it, and not like ketchup, which is what some people use.' Some restaurants use that kind of thing, but that doesn't have to be the case 100%...I felt like I wasn't Thai enough in many ways, and I tried to compensate through my knowledge of food.

But then, I remember meeting, she was also Thai-American, she was half-Thai, and you know she just approached food with 'it's her right,' like by extension of being Thai, she had a right to participate in it. At first, my instinctive reaction was to be shocked, like, 'Whoa! You can dare to do that?' because I had been told I was not Thai enough, even though I'm more than half-Thai, right? I'm like full Thai, but I felt like I wasn't allowed to know about food or participate in food, which shows because I felt like I didn't belong enough, seeing her made me reconsider my approach to it and unpack all of the stuff that I have been told growing up...

Tee considered the layered histories of who can claim their racial, ethnic, and cultural identities, their friend's boldness inspired Tee to unpack the purity notions behind impositions of authenticity and who could be credible partakers. Alice started talking about the specificities in language around her race and ethnicity, and how those origins also point to different food cultures:

I am Black-American and then my dad is Black-American, and my mom is African [and my kids]. I'm making my own food, from my culture, it's kind of different for others. We're going outside to our friends, or family. It's kind of interesting, kind of different... food has taught me about my family, cultural traditions, and the history of the region where my ancestors lived.

For Alice, delineating between being Black and African was connected to specific historical, familial, ancestral, and cultural traditions and foods. For Amadeo, navigating bicultural identities looked as simple as modifying ramen and making it with shared knowledges, as well as exploring what authenticity or connection to culture looked like with his mother. Amadeo spoke to not having as much access to learning about his culture apart from his direct ties to his ancestry:

Food is definitely the main way I was taught concrete things about the two main cultures that I have the biggest ties to through my ancestry. With both Italian-American culture and Thai culture, I didn't have access to language, big communities, or even access to my extended family. So, I'd say learning that cuisine and different markers of those foods from those cultures was significant in learning much about either of those cultures at all.

With a lack of access to cultural influences (extended family, communities, language), food can close that gap (Zafiro, Christene). The notion of fusion was also touched upon by participants to reflect how neighbouring localities and learned techniques can spring up in unexpected ways in situations. Christene reflected:

Indian people love "Hakka" Chinese food. It feels so cultural to me, like I feel ownership over it. My friend, who's also Indian and from a similar part of India, and one of the few people who knows about, appreciates and craves Hakka Chinese food. We just looked at each other that morning like, "let's get Hakka food, please." It feels like there's some sense of community appreciation over it...

One of my family's really good friends is actually Chinese from India, and they run a Hakka restaurant, and it's amazing. Growing up, this was the only context of Chinese food. It's very Indo-Chinese food.

Born and raised in India, they present as Chinese. Their last name is Li, but they speak heavy—they sound like my parents, and they run this restaurant. Sometimes, I go by my parents house, especially on a Saturday. There will be Hakka food from this restaurant at their house, part of that sharing of food again. This unique cultural fusion.

Figure 56

Christene and Friend Craved Hakka Food



Note. Christene noted during her visit to extended family in Mumbai, every restaurant included Chinese food on the last page of their menu.

Yi Shi also shared more about fusion, in the ways that the flavours and ingredients they tend toward end up appearing when making other recipes:

I also started learning like years ago to start learning cooking not just Chinese food, so I can get a taste of all the other cultures' food. But I make it really badly. I'm always adding ginger at the start, ginger, and miso. Like, 'The soup is not thick enough, so I'm gonna add in what I thought would thicken the soup.' But it turns out to be fusion at the end.

In these photos, Yi Shi reflected on the resourcefulness of their domestic household to attend to menstrual cramps:

I just find scraps from my fridge...and this is purple yam which got a week ago from a Chinese delivery app. We also had some leftover takeout from Grange Park just because we don't like cooking meat. [The restaurant] just didn't really get affected by inflation and Covid. One of the most affordable places in my neighborhood. I'm so glad I could buy from there. Also, we don't like prepping meat because it's gonna take another hour or so in addition. We made purple rice, and then we put pork floss over. Fusion meal, with lots of care.

Figure 57

Yi's Fusion Meal With Lots of Care



Note. Yi and their partner prepared candied beet salad, pork floss on purple rice, and takeout meat and vegetables for a fusion dinner.

SB realized that his personality was infused in his approach to food:

I'm always searching for something new, it's a blend of everything. It's good to be perfect in one thing, but I also want to experience everything mixed together, which makes a perfect combination. That's kind of similar to Indian food now that I realize because the blend of so many spices mixed together, little bit of everything, but overall it comes out great. A small sprinkle of little experiences—this is what makes me, me... While I was having this interview, I just came across how Indian food was flitted to my personality. I just kind of blend of everything. Which I just realized in this interview. I was like, 'Wow!' Food can be a form of expression. Although you don't feel that connected, it can be. If you find metaphors in food, I just realized in two weeks how much we are connected to food...

SB shared his own approach to fusion with the things he enjoyed:

I have a Chinese friend, and I was telling him, 'Hey, do you eat Manchurian?' He was, 'No, it's not Chinese food.' I was, 'No, it's Chinese food.' But then I realized it's 'Indian Chinese.' It's influenced, but not Chinese.

Kind of similar...this is chicken—it's marinated. These are the spices which we add in. I also experimented, I love experimenting. There's a Korean dish called 'tteok-bokki.' They have rice cakes in it. So, in my [chicken masala], I added rice cakes. If you see, the plate, there are rice cakes [with the curry]. It was so good, I loved it, and this was the best chicken...it was BOMB. Food is one of the most important things about one's culture...I am grateful I get to try different cuisines after coming to USA and now I understand different cultures well.

Figure 58

SB's Experimental Chicken Masala with Tteok



Note. SB's experimented with his chicken masala by including Korean rice cakes, tteok.

Finally, Kayleen shared her varying influences and creative impulse that affects how she does fusion:

We eat with our eyes. That's another concept that I grew up with. Being able to express my creativity, like plating. I sometimes do fusion foods, or utilizing Asian flavors, Mexican cuisine flavors, combining Indian flavors, and other, like Thai, or Vietnamese, it feels like you can put together a dish that can be unique, and also highlights various different cultures in one dish. I think that's kind of like how it reflects me.

For Kayleen, making fusion foods and care about plating are ways to express her creativity.

Making New: Adding to Family Tradition

“I was reflecting a lot about this immigration story in my family. That's part of our culture, like that mix of our roots and our new beginnings.”—Laura

What works now? Participants reflected on better listening to their bodies and what traditions they wanted to hold. Food serves as a cultural link for people – as participants listen to their memories of family and culture, they also reflect on bringing the unique dimension of their family practices or themselves into tradition, combining old with new, making hybrids. For example, Christene's Catholicism is a mix of practices that are Christian and culturally steeped in her background and family's preferences. As Amadeo shared, his older pre-colonization practices for religion and spirituality also mix with his creativity for baking.

In sharing time with family, folks have shared their intention of making food particularly special for celebrations and holidays (e.g. anniversaries, birthdays, death-aversaries, Christmas, Lunar New Year, Dia de los Muertos). For Alexander Mateo, he spoke about individualizing food and making it “special” to adapt it to current life to celebrate in meals. Amadeo expanded, “What tastes good to you is meaningful in some way,” and spoke about the changes he has made to adjust to his partner and child's tastebuds. Alice's photos depict a celebration that involved different foods brought

together. Christene reflected on how improvement has guided her experimentation and dialogues with her mother as part of the cooking experience, and experience of their relationship together.

Christene observed that local ingredients, time constraints, and desire for ingenuity inspired her to use garam masala in new ways:

Learning alongside my mom, that opportunity to experiment. There's something fun about cultural fusion—taking some of those more traditional methods and dishes. I always say to my mom, 'I don't know if I'm gonna have time once a year to grind my own spices. Let's sit down and find the store-bought version of this that's the closest to yours.' Some of those practices where maybe we cut a little bit of corners. We experiment a little bit...I'll take some of those more traditional spices—take the Garam Masala that my mom made because she'll send my brother and me home with some, but I'll use it in a nontraditional sense—I won't use it in a curry, I'll use it to marinate fish. I'll use it [for] something a little bit different. That expression of figuring out where the traditional cultural aspects fit into my life, and fit into this position that I hold of straddling two worlds a little bit—the ability to incorporate it in different ways.

For Christene, fusion could be placing something unexpected through technique, and just as it was for sweets, how the spice itself varies from household to household:

Another example of that is one of the core spices used in Indian cooking is called garam masala...unique to each family in terms of the mix of the spices. It's maybe a mix of 12 different spices, but the ratio that you use is very specific to your family. Similarly, my mom learned her Garam Masala recipe that really impacts the taste of the food.

My mom will always say 'you can give the recipe to 20 different people, but if they make it with their own Garam Masala, it will end up tasting different if they use the exact same recipe'—just that one spice has so much power in dictating the flavor...it's another cultural experience that is so historic. This recipe goes back so far, and similarly, once a year, we'll sit down and help divvy out the spices, and my mom will grind enough of this masala to last for a whole year, and then we'll do it again.

Christene talked about how this knowledge was absorbed through the continual observation:

My mom makes another Indian dish, biryani, which is a very flavorful rice dish. My mom has these secrets, ways, techniques that she does that makes it so unique to her. It was these things that she learned from her grandmother, and generationally, that gets passed down orally and through observation.

Food is so central to time spent, a lot of time spent in the family setting is in and around the kitchen...[there is] this expectation that you absorb it. You're so entrenched in it, thinking about our history because it's so connected to food. That knowledge sharing comes from existing in the home because existing in the home means that you're in proximity to food, proximity to tradition and culture. These things that are so unique to your family—to 'how you do this.'

Christene kept asking questions and building her family relationships, one integral to learning about her culture and building her own flexibility to her contexts. Her learning is done through observation, immersion, and experimentation in the kitchen, to arrive at her own ratio for garam masala and non-traditional ingredient for marination.

Amadeo shared the star anise pizzelles that his family loves and his own approaches to making them for his family. His grandmother was his primary teacher around baking, and Amadeo spoke about wanting to find the same pizzelle iron that his grandmother had in her home. He continued discussing how he made pizzelles for his family now:

I used to take a stack of five [of pizzelles] out the door on the way to school, and made them with the same intention. My [child] likes them, my spouse missed them. One of my spouse's first interactions with my blood family was staying with my grandmother and we made pizzelles there, that was meaningful for me...

I make anise seed pizzelles, or at least my family does. And it's hard to get, not whole seed anise with the full stars, but the little seeds already shelled. ...This is what I grew up doing. My [child] was so happy in those photos, too. I think that should be in there. [For the] pizzelle ones, I wanted to try and get it picturesque, and the process of the iron. And then the cookies are really beautiful themselves, because they're usually flowers or snowflakes. They look good inherently. I was trying to teach

my [child] how to make them. I wanted [my child's] little hands, mixing or helping in there, too.

Figure 59

Amadeo and His Child's Pizzelles



Note. Amadeo noted the importance of finding a pizzelle iron or similar cookie iron, sometimes available at Italiani Delis or online. He shared that some dust their pizzells with powdered sugar.

In interpreting sibling and personal adaptations of recipes, Laura expanded on her interpretation of her mother's knowledges, and how that impacted her use of the molcajete with her wife to build new history within their family:

This is part of the preparation process for the chicken, the molcajete. This is a traditional Mexican cooking tool, every family has their own molcajete. For example, my mother's molcajete is from her great-grandmother. Zafiro, my wife and I bought this one in Mexico, maybe three years after being together because we wanted to have our own molcajete because every molcajete has the family's flavors. It absorbs

flavors and it becomes a spice itself. This molcajete has been with us for, I would say eleven years. Very young molcajete compared to what other families have, but we brought it from Mexico.

Figure 60

Laura and Zafiro's Molcajete with Chipotle Marinade



Note. Laura shared her traditional Mexican cooking tool made of volcanic stone. She used this to mix spices and marinades, specifically from her mother's chipotle chicken recipe.

Shaping new histories by bringing herself and her wife into the flavours of a spice, is a beautiful way to understand how history is being written into the present in an embodied way—that they were creating new tradition together with their molcajete to carry their own distinct family flavour from their hometown. Laura reflected about writing new history, and on her mother's ingenuity being pivotal in creating tradition:

A history of a new family. My wife and I, we're a family as well. So, we have created our own recipes, and we have blended our family's recipes

into one. It's also a history about extended family and chosen family, because in some of our recipes, there are ingredients, or in some of our meals there are recipes from friends that we really like. My history is a lot about family. My nuclear family where I was born. Then, the family I built with my wife, and then my chosen family with my friends.

Figure 61

Laura's Chipotle Chicken and Kale Salad



Note. Laura shared a recipe invented by her mother. It included a marinade of mayonnaise, chipotle, and a mix of spices mixed in the molcajete. The chicken was covered with the marinade and then, fried. The kale salad was a recipe from a Canadian friend—Laura's favourite salad in the world. It included kale, olive oil, lemon, parmesan cheese, salt, pepper, and garlic.

My mother is very present in my food practices because I cook many of her recipes, and some of the recipes she just invented—she just made them because she was craving for something, and she had little time to cook. So, she came up with something, and it became a family recipe. And that has happened with many recipes we have in our family...

This is part of my family food practice that is very specific to what my wife and I have been building. We went on a camping trip two weeks ago

and she's an overachiever, and she likes to have very sophisticated meals sometimes, and I am more practical. In this scenario, she said, 'I want to cook shrimp' and fish, real fish. So she bought this fish that was already prepared, from the Italian store. It has lemon, rosemary, and thyme inside. It took a long time for her to make fire, but she made it. We were improvising.

For example, the foil that you see there, I told her, 'Maybe, we should use the foil to get the temperature spread throughout the fish.' She asked her mom for a sauce for the shrimp, the dish is called pescado, depending on the families and the restaurants. We didn't have all the ingredients. So we improvised and created our own with hot sauce, some grinded guajillo, and garlic, and put them directly into the fire. It was so good, the best meal we had on that camping trip.

Figure 62

Laura's Grilled Fish and Take on Camarones Zarandeados



Note. Laura and Zafiro's first camping experience included a fish cooked with rosemary, thyme, lemon, butter, salt, and pepper, and their own version of butterfly shrimps with a special marinade of hot sauce, mayonnaise, garlic, and other spices.

Who makes culture? We do, and Laura's example is a key part of how the culture is the 'what' of who we are—we are comprised of what we do.

Pearlly also reflected on the myriad influences on how she has come to learn to cook, like tracing a new favourite dish as her newfound inspiration and the importance of trial and error to solidify her technique:

'Wow! I love these dishes so well,' [and] we love to learn [and have] my own pattern of doing those things. I have to learn from my step-aunt, [combining] all this knowledge together... Sometimes, I go to the internet, I browse...the procedure, how to make some dishes. Just practicing—although at first I will make some errors...I've been giving it some trial, like three times, four times. The more you do it, the more you become proficient.

Pearlly reflected on what is taught through food and what she also hopes to impart to her son, including the ability to learn how to expand his palate and be able to cook something nutritious in learning from his travels.

My mom is my number one teacher, and my number one support. She's taught me a lot of things, a lot more local dishes. I want my son to travel the world, lots more local dishes. [He] might encounter a lot more local dishes that might not be nutritious, [so to] come and learn how to cook some simple dishes for yourself. Get something from the market that's safe.

Each family has their own way of cooking. Mishie and Yi shared how they grew up with curiosity and learnt by cooking by themselves and also observing family and letting their individuality shape what cooking means for them specifically. Yi spoke about Chinese cooking as not strict on recipes itself but mindful of the style of cooking, and how fire is a key component (not available over stove top), "I think a gas stove and a really good wok are also the secret, it just helps." Yi Shi shared:

One thing I noticed is that we don't really follow strict recipes... What our parents did is you always keep on tasting until the end. So, towards the

end of the cooking session, you taste by using the corner of spatula, and see if you need to add more salt and sugar. There's no real scale, you don't weigh how much sugar you add, or how much salt you add on Chinese recipes. It's always 'a moderate amount of...' So, I guess there's a lot more flexibility in terms of cooking. Our family has their own way of cooking, and it usually passes on by generations, more so family and generations, and communal cooking, and less so on finding a recipe book or finding things online.

Chinese cooking relies mostly on continuous tasting and family traditions, not just on strict recipes, which might give hints as to why Yi Shi felt 'communal cooking' was an important value to them to maintain their connection to their loved ones.

Similar to Yi's desire to feel fire in the food and cooking, Zafiro reflected on the desire for this element to make it into her food in the same way, and how her memories of home and family are connected to these techniques that bridge her contexts with what she has learnt:

Yes, and that's me with fire. I just love cooking things with fire. I think it makes me happy. The connection with the wood, and the flavor that it gives. It also reminds me—my dad's family is from the northwest side of the country, and they used to live close to the ocean. There was this dish of fish, when we went back to their hometown, or in my hometown...it's made with a very special wood that you can only find in that region, and it gives the fish a particular taste because of the wood. Maybe I was trying to recreate something by cooking seafood and the fish that day in the forest? Just remembering my grandparents, and my father's family.

Figure 63

Zafiro's Open Flame at Camp



Note. Zafiro's enjoyment of the fire and wood, and seafood infused with the smoke.

Caregivers and Their Roles as Special Knowledge Keepers.

“It keeps evolving. Right now, food in Mexico keeps evolving as people are finding new ways to understand their past, their present, and their future.” – Zafiro

There is an evolution of food in different contexts and it continues to evolve as people find new ways to understand their past, present, future. As participants (Amadeo, Mishie, Yi Shi, Kayleen) reflected on food being an integral part of connecting to their families and loved ones, the reciprocal nature of this connection can also be observed in

knowledge making. Pearly, Alice, and Mishie talked about giving knowledge back to the parent, and embracing culture with modern approaches (e.g. internet, TikTok recipe trends, gaining new palettes in appreciation of their partner and preferences).

Similarly, for Mishie, it is important for her to impart to her family the knowledge of where food comes from and that her duty as a parent is also to connect her children to Cantonese cuisine:

Some of my photos, see that the kids are cooking with me. Last night, [Noah], for the first time, made the fish. Previously, I just let him put it into the steamer... Yesterday, he handled it out of the bag and washed it, he touched it, cause I was like 'It is important to me and for you to understand where your food comes from, how it's made, and a sense of appreciation.' But also this is a dish he absolutely loves. So, if you love this dish and get exposure at a young age to being able to make it, hopefully, it means that they will do it when they're older, too.

Figure 64

Mishie and Noah's Steamed Fish



Note. Noah learnt how to steam fish, one of his favourite dishes. He washed and watched the fish dutifully.

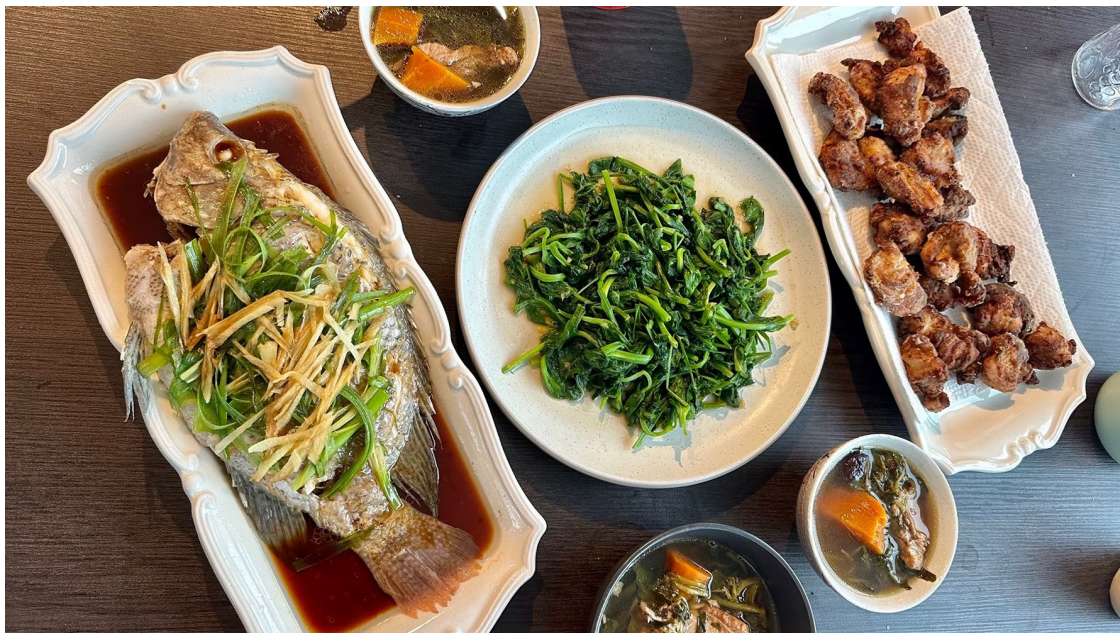
I remember watching my parents in the kitchen, whether at the restaurant or at home. They wouldn't let me touch things for a really long time. But I always appreciated the flavors that they taught me about, and I would get to eat, and we'd be able to share together after. The reason why I continue to do this and with the kids now is because I witnessed that growing up. It's really important that these traditions be carried forward. If I don't cook Asian food or Cantonese food at home a lot... I feel like this future generation is these kids, they don't get the opportunity to eat Cantonese food as much unless they go out to eat.

It's amazing that now, our generation, the diasporic Asians can like cook different cuisines, right? ... With children, I've learned, they try things 15 times before they get used to it. So like if they say 'no' once, and now, maybe after the fifth time, they eat it, and they like it.

I'm learning about past generations and future generations through food practices. It's also learning how to pseudo part-time parent and parenting stuff through food practices, too. [Emily] loves making the rice, the younger one... We have [Noah] help with the fish, and then my partner helps with the chicken...A collaborative meal.

Figure 65

Mishie and Her Three Sous Chefs



Note. This collaborative meal was made by her sous chefs, Noah, Emily, and her partner.

The kids love it whenever I can cook, they get really excited, they really appreciate it, they're really sweet. This is a watercress soup I made for me, my partner, and the kids. They love drinking watercress soup, but I really don't like making it, because watercress has so many bugs inside. Endless bugs, endless rinsing to actually clean it off...I don't like the labor you go through to make the food that loved ones enjoy. I don't like get to cook every night for sure...

Whenever I cook, I do gravitate towards 三菜一湯 [sam choi jyut tong; three dishes, one soup] even though I'm not trying to. So that is [Emily] washing her rice behind that heart is a really big smile! She loves rice, so making it makes her really happy...She gets really excited just to be able to wash it and put it in and be part of that process. So, whenever we start dinner, we thank each other for making each different component.

Figure 66

Mishie's Watercress Soup and Emily's Rice



Note. Both Mishie and Emily rinsed their ingredients significantly to get the bugs and starch out of their respective dishes.

Mishie reflected on the intergenerational component of knowledge making and passing down recipes, or appreciation for her cultural cuisine within her role as a “part-time bonus parent.” Her intentional involvement of her children’s preferences and developmental stage informs their roles in the kitchen and task of making a meal together as a family. This comes from wanting to share and keep knowledges with younger individuals so that knowledge is not lost. Mishie reflected that because her parents were in the restaurant business, she learnt most timing of dishes and approaches to heat and cooking by observing her parents in their survival moving to Canada. As she reflected on her children desiring autonomy, wanting to be involved, it also impacted their increased enjoyment and appreciation of the meal because of the process. She was intentional about making it something to enjoy when younger so domestic tasks related around food could be received with more enthusiasm. Mishie continued her reflections about the intergenerational nature of her food knowledge:

When the kids are involved with their cooking they enjoy it more, and they eat better, ‘cause I think they just want to be part of the process, they’re very curious about what I’m cooking, what they eat... It’s important for me to have all this knowledge, absorb it more, and pass it on. I think even more so in cooking with them and learning with them.

The more I’m like, ‘my goodness, I really need to document a lot of these different dishes with my mom.’ These techniques are important, there’s so much I can learn online. But I have to reach towards my own family or my own parents and their own cooking styles. I think the intergenerational knowledge and care is really important, and it really keeps us connected to each other. Whether in life or in passing, it’s how we still feel connected with each other...

That is my mom. That is our family house I’ve grown up in and she is cooking crab. She’s steaming crab. At a young age, I learned how to prepare the crab, what spot to split it and to kill it, and I was the person to do it for my god-mom, she doesn’t like doing it...

We will be having hot pot, and then she'll also steam a crab. Last night, we had hot pot—this is my mom's silky chicken, this is gai bo, a chicken hotpot... [We also had] fish that someone caught, and beef. And the fish someone caught, she filleted it onto a beautiful plate that you could then like hot pot with those fillet pieces like a restaurant. I guess because my parents both work in restaurants, their presentations always looks a certain way, which is probably why I also like to present my food in a certain way. There's definitely a lot of learning there. But this is my mom, me telling her about the study and then her posing for it.

Figure 67

Mishie's Mother Prepared Steamed Crab and Silky Chicken



Note. Mishie's mother poses with her steamed crab, and her black chicken hotpot features some mustard greens.

Mishie's family did not know English and it was integral to her family's survival in a new country. So learning about food practices, kitchen culture, and culture dynamics within a different country was made possible through her parents' work. A few

participants in this study were parents—and reflections about their parenting included the importance of passing on knowledge, making new knowledges, and carrying on our loved one’s teachings. Mishie was deeply concerned about the passing on of knowledge throughout her interview – Do language, culture, and other knowledges get translated? How do we stay connected with our ancestors? Her interview offered her own experiences of what it meant to be diasporic as well as what she anticipated for her children to be in the diaspora.

Amadeo reflected on what he was trying to teach his child about his connection to his cultures and how to keep tradition alive for posterity:

One of the first things I think I did with [my child] when we were interacting in the physical world and not just online, was, ‘Let [them] help me cook.’ And see like those Italian-American recipes...A lot of people are convinced or forced to give up their culture. I have a friend who's pointed out in the cities: Not just in the States, but kinda everywhere you get into this toxic urbanism, or whatever you want to call it, industrialization, where people, particularly youth, are like, ‘if it's old, it's bad.’ Or ‘Oh, that's what my grandma would do.’” Like, ‘Yeah. It is! And you should keep it alive!’

For me, the way that I keep making the cultural recipes I do have (that aren't just melting pot American recipes or generic American culture recipes) is significant to me and my values. You can pry these Italian-American recipes from my cold dead hands. I probably don't have any Thai-American cooking, except for the thing that it seems like every Asian-American does with instant ramen, which is if you deign to eat instant ramen, we're going to modify it in some way and not just microwave it with water. That was a big thing for me as well, cause it's in my head growing up, ‘That's just what you do with Ramen.’

Amadeo shared this moment of intergenerational connectivity like Mishie as well when he discussed what it was like to feel disconnected to his family:

So, we're in this Asian-American restaurant, looking very Asian-American, but also no idea what we're doing. We have very little connection to this culture. We don't know what these words mean in Japanese. Most of the menu was in Japanese, so my mom was like, ‘What

do we do?’ and I was like, ‘Google.’ It’s like doing an old thing better than before.

Figure 68

Amadeo and Mother Enjoying Ramen Together



Note. Cuisine exploration is one avenue of racial socialization that Amadeo enjoyed with his mother.

After that, we got Boba at #1 Boba Tea and I brought it home to my [child] and shared that with [them]. This is difficult to see, but that's sort of a little smile. It looks like a mix of different berry flavors, wild berry, or whatever people call it. I've drank that for years and I convinced my [child] to chew on the bobas. [They] don't like those that much, but that was nice cause we've kind of been slowly building up to my mom, meeting my daughter, and healing as an extended family...So, I liked that for us, a snapshot into a healing going on.

Figure 69*Amadeo's Thai Tea*

Note. Amadeo expressed enjoyment making thai tea boba and sometimes buying boba for his family.

Like Christene, Kayleen talked about how food wisdom is passed through word of mouth and that recipes are not generally written. Kayleen's primary teachers were their grandparents and said, "In my family, we show you how to cook, and that's how you learn to cook. You don't write down recipes. This is like a start of what I want to do in terms of writing things down and keeping documentation." This is similar to Christene's family where knowledge was passed down orally, "Thinking about my history, a big piece of it is the oral translation of knowledge...My mom is such an amazing cook, and my grandparents before her were also amazing cooks, but that knowledge was literally

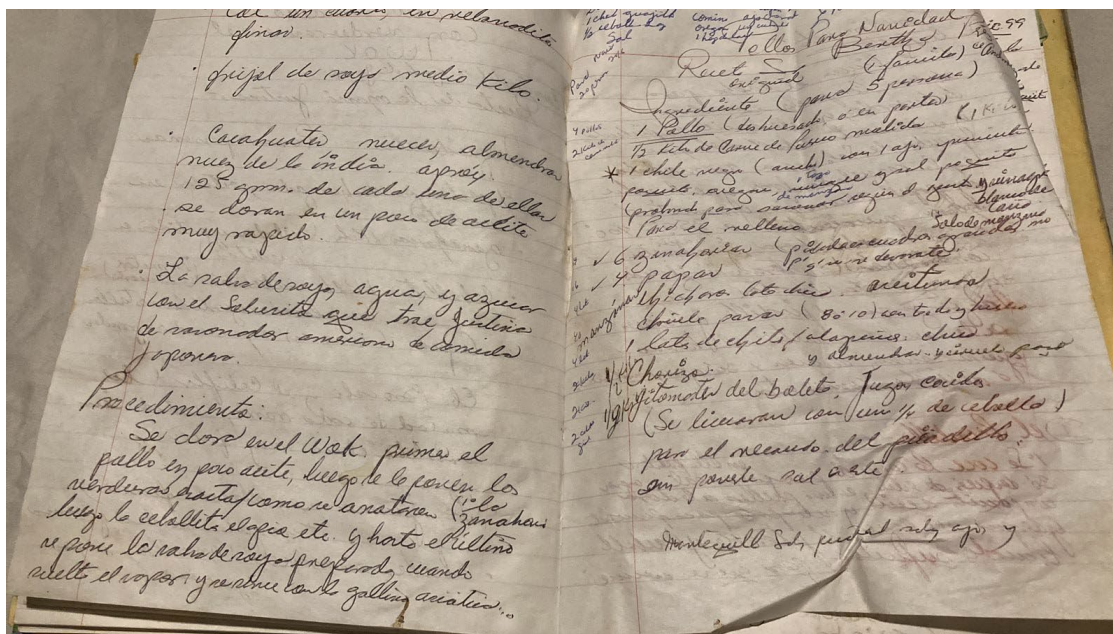
just translated orally.” Mishie and Yi have noted something about the process of translating the recipe too has been difficult because it’s not orally measured out in the same way.

Zafiro shared a picture of a family recipe book that her mother started and the way that special moments were documented within it:

She writes most of the oldest recipes of the family in there... Every Christmas with my grandmother, we made chicken with this very delicious filling—ground meat and some vegetables, and it took us all day, since we woke up, maybe we started at 8am until 11pm. That was the dinner, and all of the family came together. My dad's family were like 30, 40 people. And it was usually just my grandmother, my mother, my Peruvian uncle, me, and maybe one of my siblings who were doing the whole dinner for the 30 people, cause other people didn't like to cook...It says ‘December 1, 1999’ on top of the page, which was not the first time that we cooked it. But, it was that Christmas that my mom decided to put it in that notebook...My mom has Parkinson's. She was diagnosed maybe 5 or 4 and a half years ago. I know she cannot write very well anymore. So, just having that picture of her writing and my grandmother's recipe is really important.

Figure 70

Zafiro’s Grandmother’s Christmas Recipe



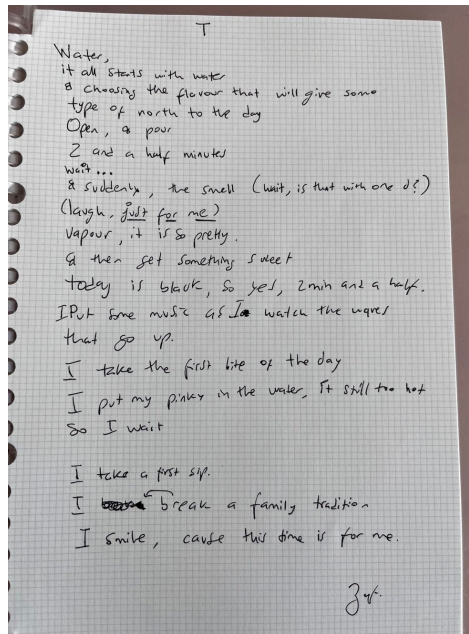
Note. Laura's mother writing alongside her grandmother's recipe, documented for posterity. Zafiro furthered this idea of listening to her body, and noticing what was traditional, and what made sense to adapt to her body:

When I was a child, my breakfast used to be really, really heavy. My mom would make steak for breakfast, or frijoles, beans, 'cause we would leave the house at 6 am and wouldn't be back until 2 pm. But also, it was for her a family tradition to have a really heavy breakfast. And, for me, I always felt bad, something with my body—just didn't [like] having a really heavy breakfast, and she was always like, 'you have to eat it.' And I was like, 'I didn't enjoy it.' Not a bit. My body doesn't work well with a lot of food before 9 am...

I don't know if it was when we came to Canada, or even a little bit before—but I started to have tea in the morning, and something very small, like cookies, or a croissant, or a bagel, or something that wasn't that heavy, and it really changed my whole mood. Also enjoying a moment that was only for me. Usually, it's the only moment of the day that Laura and I don't share a meal because each one of us likes to—except for weekends, in which we have brunch—we cook for each other. The rest of the week, I feel [that] my whole body is waking up, and I love it. I just love the peace that comes with sitting down and having tea and just thinking about it.

Figure 71

Zafiro's Poem about Tea



Note. Zafiro read this poem in the interview, reflecting on wellness routines for herself.

For Christene, the memory of the home is so tied to the memory of food and kitchen. It seemed like they were inseparable. Home is connected to the memory of family, and much of the time spent together is in the kitchen, preparing food together, learning recipes orally from mother and grandmother, “I say to my mom all the time, ‘Please, put this in a book. I don’t want it to get lost in translation.’... You’re in this world where food is so central that you almost adopt it, even without ever having a written form of it.”

Apart from modifying recipes or traditions, an important aspect of food practices is fitting to body’s needs and listening to the body with curiosity. SB reflected on a sincere attitude towards food from picking the ingredients to cooking itself, and a shift in his experiences came from recognizing the health benefits accrued through the effort:

There are some foods I don’t like, gourd and pumpkin. So, whenever my mom used to cook it, I used to be like, ‘Oh, this is so bad.’ But then, after coming [to the States], I realized how wrong I was, that food was so good. If someone will give me pumpkin, which is cooked in that way which mom cooks, I would love that. I realize the importance more. And I appreciate it more. I used to really like pizzas back in India. I used to be

like, ‘Wow, people should be so lucky to have been eating pizzas daily.; But no, I was wrong. It's just changing country made me open to more new experiences, changed my perspective a lot.

Growth and reflection for Tee appeared as a pleasant surprise when they were asked what they thought about the documentation process:

I like how far I've come. You know, food for me, sometimes it's easy to take food at face value, like a dish is a dish, and sometimes I'm not that sentimental, but it kind of surprised me, I have more recipes than not that have meaning for me, and that surprised me. A lot of times, I think, ‘Oh, it's just maybe a random recipe I found online.’ The green curry, I forgot about it...how many of them have similar meanings.... I think it's more self-assessment, and being like, ‘Okay, I ate this food, that's good.’ So, I don't think anything has changed in a way of practices that you can see outwardly, but maybe more in what reflection that has changed a little bit. Like taking a bit more time to appreciate or taking time to say, ‘This is where I've come from,’ and appreciating that. I would say same for routine—I just wanted that reflection aspect of it.

Follow Up

At the eight-month follow-up, all 14 participants provided feedback and responded to questions about the study's impact on their food thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours. Yi noted a shift in their relationship with food related to their contexts and barriers, “now that I'm back to school, I barely have time to cook or hang out with friends. On top of that, price inflation in food is more felt...I miss what I was able to do back then.” Amadeo provided a happy update about moving states, changing jobs, and getting an increase in pay to access resources and culture. Tee, Nadia, and Zafiro responded that there had not been any changes to their everyday routines or behaviours, but they felt appreciative of the opportunities for reflection. Several participants endorsed the following since the study:

- increased mindfulness about food practices, including eating (Laura, Kayleen, Alexander, Liz, Pearly, Mishie, Christene)
- increased awareness about food's connectivity with their cultural background (Laura, Christene), family connections (Zafiro), historical context (Christene),

sense of community (Liz), intergenerational connections (Mishie), or sense of joy and connection with loved ones (SB)

- increased engagement in healthy eating behaviours (Laura, Kayleen, Alexander)
- increased sharing of histories with friends and loved ones (Christene, SB, Mishie)
- incorporation of creativity and curiosity in food waste or sciences or fusion (Alice, Kayleen, SB)
- reduction in ‘unhealthy’ eating behaviours (Kayleen, Liz)
- improved cooking mood (Alice) or overall mood (Alexander)
- ‘progression’ in their food journey (Tee)
- increased appreciation for current food practices in relation to their mental and physical health (Nadia), daily wellbeing (Zafiro), emotional safety, and personal satisfaction (SB)
- more engagement in spiritual practices (Kayleen)
- shifting mindset to ‘fueling’ the body (Liz)
- increased attention to food waste (Alice)
- reduction of stress (Alexander)
- increased frequency of cooking (Mishie, SB)
- increased connections with children through cooking (Mishie)

Overall, the intentionality within the process of selection, sharing, and documentation, allowed participants to reflect and reveal what was significant to them, appreciate their own journey with food, understand where they were coming from, and find daily ways to connect with their loved ones.

Given the study’s intervention angle and HEART framework through engaging strength-based cultural traditions to ground their being and build historical consciousness, participants were given opportunities to engage in culturally-congruent food practices meaningful for them. Their identity exploration through photovoice and interview uncovered further reflections about their identities, histories, future visions, and sense of belonging to the broader ecosystem. As the food practices were grounded in embodied practices of caring for themselves, these everyday acts reflect their myriad connections and channels of knowing and being *with*.

Among the list of endorsed wellness behaviours: half of the participants expressed increased mindfulness about their food practices; half of the participants shared increased

awareness and connection of food practices with their loved ones, family, cultural background, intergenerational and historical context, and communities; three participants reported increased engagement in healthful eating behaviours; three participants noted increased sharing of histories with loved ones; and three participants continued their curious and creative engagement of food. From this eight-month follow-up, the qualitative report reflects that meaningful and mindful engagement of culturally-congruent healing practices can potentially carry long-term wellness effects.

Summary

Our 14 participants offered glimpses into their daily world, notions of healing, and knowledge making through the lens of food. How, when, what, why, where, and with whom they ate revealed their personal understandings of healing, sense of adventure, experiences of comfort in their palates, creative impulses, and histories with restriction. Participants shared their appreciation for the opportunity to reflect about their food journeys and how they orient to the practices around it with intentionality and gratitude.

Through their web of intimate relationships, we saw how feeding culture was a significant avenue for expression of affect and affection: people experienced connectedness, 'home,' togetherness, and family by sitting together and sharing. Further, food was a significant way in which people expressed their cultural values, customs, and connection to their origins or hometown, especially when they were further away. The flexibility, creativity, and care people demonstrated in their journey was also accompanied with intentionality and gratitude (picking groceries, cooking for self, seeing it as self-care, quality time, being gentle with the bodily and resource constraints). There are multiple avenues to cultivate a sense of wellness and connection to our roots and history. From preparing things for ourselves or loved ones, to reflecting on the stories we have learnt about ourselves and where things can come into our bodies, they are all part of healing. Care and connection was a common thread in people's food sharing experiences, and a way to experience home. Participants offered insights into how knowledge was passed through some recipe sharing, and how much of it had to be observed, continually retold, and in dialogue when making food themselves by listening to their own bodies and wants in their current contexts.

The reflection time was integral to deepening historical memory and connection. Through understanding our constraints, complexities (barriers – time, money, resources), and our first teachers (relatives, caregivers, teachers, parents, loved ones), we learn about the nutritional, soulful, and sacred nature of food as they help us embody that sense of interconnectedness. Recovering a sense of ‘healing’ or a path that enables us to celebrate our own culture is connected to having the time and curiosity to explore our own sense of connection (even pushing against the notions of ‘not enough’ and being able to connect to what is ours, what is personal, what is familial). This includes mixing up what is both ‘nontraditional’ and ‘hybrid’ and unique to the individual for their cultural identity.

Given that food was a significant everyday avenue for people to experience their connectedness to self, others, and broader histories, it also points to the centrality of knowledge making and memory keeping around food stories. People shared the ways in which food carried material and spiritual connections to the land: how it held memories to their ancestors, interconnections with the plants and animals, and the sacredness of our interdependence with our environment. A couple of participants offered their medicinal approaches to food to help us understand plant knowledge and healing through the lens of traditional Chinese medicine. A few participants talked about the importance of respect and care in relationship to the land and the people who till and toil—all of these are related to Indigenous ways of knowing and relationality. The memories that food carried through ingredients, labour process, family recipes, family customs, and cultural celebrations revealed participants memories about colonization, internalized racism, stereotype reduction through acting as a cultural ambassador, transphobic interactions, and patriarchal standards within the domestic sphere. Participants impressed the

importance of remembering own family's and community's history, making new memories, and practicing these internalized knowledges.

Participants kept knowledge and made new knowledges, and this knowledge frequently reflected “la mezcla”—hybridity, fusion, mixtures, mashers of their understanding of cultural tradition, familial origins, spiritual orientations, ancestral practices, and personal preferences. A few participants reflected on the notion of authenticity to connect with cultures that are more distal to them. Others reflected on how the rigidity of ‘authenticity’ to cultures proximal kept them from truly connecting with themselves. Others offered the ways people are making new, and what it means to practice certain routines or traditions, in the contexts of colonized, diasporic, immigrant, or settler. With the creative impulse to make, and make new, some of the participants’ intergenerational reflections pointed to the new and old they wanted to pass to the next generation. Overall, the prism of food refracted their ideological values, intimacies with loved ones, community ties, and historical stories.

Of note, seven participants endorsed increased mindfulness about their food practices and seven participants reported increased awareness about such practices’ connection to their sense of belonging, cultural identity, and community connection at the eight-month follow-up. Under the HEART framework, this study thus presents a potential avenue for healing that can be fruitful for individual and collective well-being.

CHAPTER V DISCUSSION

Daily Intimacies

Food practices map our relations. These ‘micromoments’ and snapshots of people’s daily activities connected us to their identity constellations, relationships, and cultural contexts (Galliher et al., 2017). Multiple participants explored, approached, and internalized labels that felt meaningful and congruent to their identity configurations via food practices. This habitability of people’s identities exists *as is* and is qualified by a place of “incommensurability,” contradictory spaces of inhabitation (Boellstorff, 2005) or “la mezcla,” hybridity (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Caring and eating is materialized in our bodily and relational intimacies (Lavis et al., 2015). Feeding self and others well is about nurturing our body, spirit, and loved relations (e.g., partners, caregivers, children, friends, and creation). Sharing and receiving food was a significant activity and daily ritual to demonstrate care for self and others, particularly when people had dietary needs (meat restrictions, lactose intolerance), health concerns (IBS), or preferences (spice tolerance). Some food-based rituals honoured the passing of loved ones in remembrance of them (Kayleen’s Đám Giỗ), celebrated their lovers (Laura and Zafiro’s anniversary), involved sharing with families (Christene’s Christmas sweets, Mishie’s hotpot sauce) and spending time with friends (Alice’s ice cream), and highlighted their connections to significant communities (Tee’s trans kin). Commensality, or eating together—the family meal in particular—has benefits for psychosocial well-being and physical health (Jönsson et al., 2021). Frequent family meals can aid in children and adolescents’ psychosocial, nutritional health (Dallacker et al., 2018), impact eating behaviours later in life like accessing culinary pleasure and

nutritional status (Vesnaver & Keller, 2011), and is associated with better life satisfaction (Kim, 2020). Commensality's positive health effects have been highlighted in some national nutrition policies (Japan, Canada, Brazil) and civil initiatives promoting family meals (Jönsson et al., 2021). While Jönsson et al. (2021) noted the lack of causality, taking on a HEART lens of healing, can be helpful to understand the social benefits of family and community-rooted practices.

Such food practices also reflected people's cultural connections to their ancestors and sense of home or origin. Bailey (2017) wrote on Indian migrants' sense of belonging in Netherlands as connected to the food they brought from home and its generation of memories—the exchange of food, eating practices, and care can create a sense of 'co-presence' among migrants within a transnational context. Eating with intention was a way to recall a sense of togetherness with family (SB's table conversations), tribe (Alexander's pork meat), as diaspora (Mishie's medicines), or hometown (Zafiro's recipe book).

Intentionality and Reflection for Healing

Well-being is holistic. Whether it is about family's integral role in self-actualization, particularly among Latine cultures (Ortiz, 2020), appreciating the power of context in determining happiness (Joshani & Weijers, 2014), or noting the broader set of spiritual and economic determinants of wellbeing (Ng et al., 2005; White et al., 2014), participants offered physical, emotional, cultural, and spiritual conceptualizations of what healing looked like for them. Specifically, intentionality and reflection guided their micromoments as well as experiences of healing through more purposeful connection. The way participants oriented to their food behaviours with guiding values of care,

cultural connection, or transmission of knowledge felt like a demonstration of values-oriented living, a part of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Hayes, 2011).

Participants remarked on the purpose-driven nature of their participation study, whether it was to document their relationality with loved ones, knowledges passed through generations, or their contemplations of their cultural identities.

In their follow-up, several participants expressed continued and increased mindfulness to nourishing their bodies well, incorporating creativity, curiosity, care, and cultural sense of connection in their food choices. As participants reflected on their meaning making, some of their methods involved gratitude for their experience of care, food teachers, and contexts that enable them to feel closely connected, as well as presence to be among those relations during their feeding activities; these methods map onto the everyday strategies of gratitude and presence that spiritual and religious LGBTQ+ BIPOC engaged for positive identity experiences (Grace Wong et al., 2022). Participants also observed, within their healing practices and approach, the importance of reflection to understand themselves, make meaning, and to move forward. This mirrors the ways that therapists use reflection to verbalize implicit or explicit meaning-making, summarize, and engage or sustain change talk (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

The mention of the spirit, soul, and sacred within this study, especially among participants who do not ascribe to a religion, is also significant in our conceptions of healing. Duran and colleagues (2008) elaborated on soul-wounding and conversely, soul-healing, to guide current counseling theories, treatment strategies, and research methods to aid in the psychological liberation of their clients. A soulful, heart-oriented approach can be an integral and complementary approach to therapeutic work if we are responsive

to participants' spiritual connections, worldviews, values, and needs. Alarcón (2021) also elaborated on health as a state of 'bio-psycho-socio-cultural-spiritual well-being.' The work of reflection and intentionality can be a spiritual exercise through contemplative, purposeful connection with food cultures, histories, and stories.

Interbeing and Inter-relationality through Food

There are multiple notions and conceptualizations of inter-relationality, interconnectedness, and intersubjectivity across cultures. One of interbeing, *tiếp hiện*, coined by Thích Nhất Hạnh (2017), elaborated on the Buddhist teaching that "'to be' is always to 'inter-be'...we inter-are with one another and with all life" (p. 8). Intersubjectivity, as described by Ubuntu, is experiencing the "I in you and You in me." These understandings of interrelationality can be accessed through realizing our interdependence and interconnectedness with each other, across time and space (ancestral connections and across oceans or land), and the reality of creation (interacting with other living beings and the land that sustains us). This interbeing can be understood through the banality and sacredness of eating. Consider the physical elements that our bodily composition cycles through: carbon dioxide, water, vitamins, and minerals. Consider the relational nature of caring for ourselves or others in subsistence sharing. Consider the cultural and spiritual nature of knowledge that is carried within us as we practice food rituals to remember others, or respect the process of gathering, preparing, and living off what the land has provided to us.

Our consumption of food and drink can take on more meaning if we spend time to reflect on the ways in which we regularly interact with the 'outside' which then becomes our 'inside.' Our bodies are materialized, sustained, and made anew, through the

process of eating and drinking, and attention to all beings and forces that shape what comes into us can be a reflective practice of interbeing. Cultivating our sense of interconnectedness is an essential component for collective healing, particularly under the paradigms of liberation psychology (Bryant-Davis & Moore-Lobban, 2020).

Historical Memory within Home Knowledge

Home, kitchen, dining table, gardens, and restaurants were sites of knowledge sharing, storytelling, and rewriting of meaning. Participants reflected on their first and primary teachers, many of whom were their mothers, parents, grandmothers, and other caregivers. The grammar of making home knowledge through food preparation, gathering of loved ones, technique discussion, family recipes, storying, and tradition is carried through our primary teachers through the domestic sphere. Laura named multiple family members in the process of sourcing, and SB and Christene fondly remembered their mothers at the dinner table, which indicated how caring knowledge is transmitted and brought into their relationships. Food can be used to teach food histories; practices illustrate connections to racial-ethnic identity, reprocess intergenerational trauma, and reflect collective memories and tensions between generational cohorts. Healing, as Alexander (2005) articulated, is a call to remember, a re-embodiment of memory. When people migrate, internally or externally, sacred selves are not left behind; rather they are redefined (Alexander, 2005). Many participants oriented themselves to land, plants, animals, ancestors, and themselves through gesture and intentional rituals to access the sacred. Food memories constitute participants' experience of historical consciousness (Sutton, 2011), and this was seen in how Christene, Mishie, Zafiro, Laura, and SB shared their understanding of colonialism's impact on their cultural dishes. Participants offered

different methods, kitchen appliances and tools, family recipes, dialogue and conversation, trial and error approaches that contributed to their sense of passing on ‘home knowledges.’ Some of these cultural knowledges are passed through the backyard tending to new fruits, or sharing life experience at the dinner table. Food itself carries family memories, broader political and cultural histories, and teachings about navigating life.

Troubling Authenticity

The notion of authenticity came up multiply across participants, with its own contradictions. Garcia’s (2018) ‘food mestiza consciousness’ was found in numerous participants’ reflections about the reterritorialization of their foods and importance of locality to taste hometown (Yi’s zong, sweet dumplings, Hangzhou veggies; Laura’s hometown ingredients; Zafiro’s respect in the process) and authenticity as a cultural marker (Amadeo’s restaurant visits with his mother; Tee’s claims to Thainess). Not everybody necessarily saw the flexibility of fusion. For Amadeo, having a standard of authenticity helped him feel closer to understanding his Thai culture and sense of being Asian-American. Others, including Liz, Christene, and Zafiro, indicated that food was an arena for cultural learning and connection given the lack of immediacy with extended relatives or facility in their family’s native language. While most participants did not feel as strongly about the claims to food purity or authenticity given their fluid movements within borderlands (Abarca, 2015), this aliveness in contestations shows the heterogeneity in approaches to hybridity, adaptation, and memory.

Histories are complicated; and we find new ways to move forward. Colonialism and cisheteropatriarchy impacts foodscapes, regional cuisines, access to traditional diets,

sense of domesticity, and social identities. Holding a desire to retain, adapt, or renew some traditions can be meaningful, empowering, or healing. The recovery of historical memory can aid the concretization of one's own sense of self and pride of belonging to a lineage of tradition and culture, that holds values and wisdoms about the past to create change for the future (Martín-Baró, 1994). Further, cultural hybridity can represent a transformation of consciousness among oppressed people (Freire, 1972). This is similarly echoed by Anzaldúa's (1987) call for a mestiza consciousness that invites hybridity, multiplicity, a change of consciousness, intercultural dialogue, celebration of differences, resistance, and the creation of new identities. By gaining contextual awareness of individual and collective histories, healing is connected to a community approach to conscientización, resistance to imposed systems, and creative hybridization to make a new consciousness. Borderlands anecdotes, family recipes, and culinary techniques map participants' reclamation of lineage, cross-cultural speech, and shared memories. As participants assert their experiences of connection to their ancestry, family, and ties to home, they root themselves more deeply within these relations that is essential for their racial healing (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019).

Care Work as Knowledge and Praxis

Care work is also a type of relational knowledge, ethic, and practice. Chavez-Dueñas et al. (2019) explained how Indigenous and African beliefs orient us to the heart as a guiding spirit and site of wisdom and memory. This orientation to the care, responsibility, love, and compassion that is embedded in daily expressions, is indeed how we are remembered and how we learn to remember others. Torres (2012) talked about 'ayat,' love in Aeta, as an ethic for how Aeta Indigenous women healers in the

Philippines understood their responsibility to show care, compassion, and responsibility for the people they healed through herbal medicine, prayer, and ritual. Much of this care knowledge is cultivated when we observe the “women who love us, feed us, and will remember us” (Torres, November 26, 2013). The care in daily feeding is not restricted to just the sphere and role of women (we see grandparents as caregivers, caring partners, fathers, and also unaffirming maternal figures). Still, it is important to note how care work is historically been shaped by women, and how 14 participants offered the ways they remember care from their first teachers and important women in their lives who sustain them. In an interview with Thích Nhất Hạnh, bell hooks elaborated on love “we best realize love in community... to be in community, to work in community, and to be changed by community” (2017). The reciprocity of giving and receiving care through shared food practices (eating together, food sharing, food preparation, food deliveries), can be understood through cultural customs and routines of caretaking.

Most participants noted how care can be tasted, felt, made concrete through effort in the food—this is an interesting way to receive the felt emotional nature of care. Caring for self and others looks like: drawing on Eastern and Indigenous knowledges about food as medicine, reflecting on a cuisine’s or a relationship’s complex history, recalling and adapting family recipes, attuning to the figures and labour behind meals, making new shared memories with a loved one, which can happen on individual, familial, and community levels. Elements of liberation psychology stress decolonization, recovering historical memory, and respect for indigenous wisdom (Comas-Díaz, 2021). Our interconnectedness is part of liberation psychology’s paradigm of interdependence.

Choices about feeding the self changed over time. That Tee reworked recipes from maternal figures demonstrates that care knowledge can be reinterpreted and imbued with new meaning and highlights the malleability of our routines and bodily memory surrounding food. The HEART model also named family dinners and communal meals as a site of strengthening familial relationships, modeling familism to children, and reduction of daily experiences of stress (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). Parents and parents-to-be remarked on their desire to transmit knowledges about their cultural cuisines, and values of care by demonstrating efforts that could be appreciated. Considering how the participants brought in the notion of care, and being moved by effort, memory, and resilience, food appeared as a potent site to cultivate deeper connections through their heart, and carry forward memories.

Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge

Many participants forged their own understandings and approaches to making sense of their cultures in the present, including how to remember and carry our ancestors and people who loved us forward. The impulse to pass knowledge for future generations was particularly heightened and emphasized among the parents and participants who wanted children within this study. Several participants noted learning through their food teachers, documentaries, google, youtube videos, and social media. The reclamation of food practices, including diets that sit well with the body (Mishie, Yi), mindful consumption (Nadia, Kayleen), attention to food narratives (Liz, Tee), and harvesting (Alice, Yi) contribute to the “survival of the spirit” (Cajete, 2000). Mishie elaborated on the spiritual significance of connecting to ancestral wisdoms and their ways of survival to then understand her body’s experience of foods around her. Our “struggle for

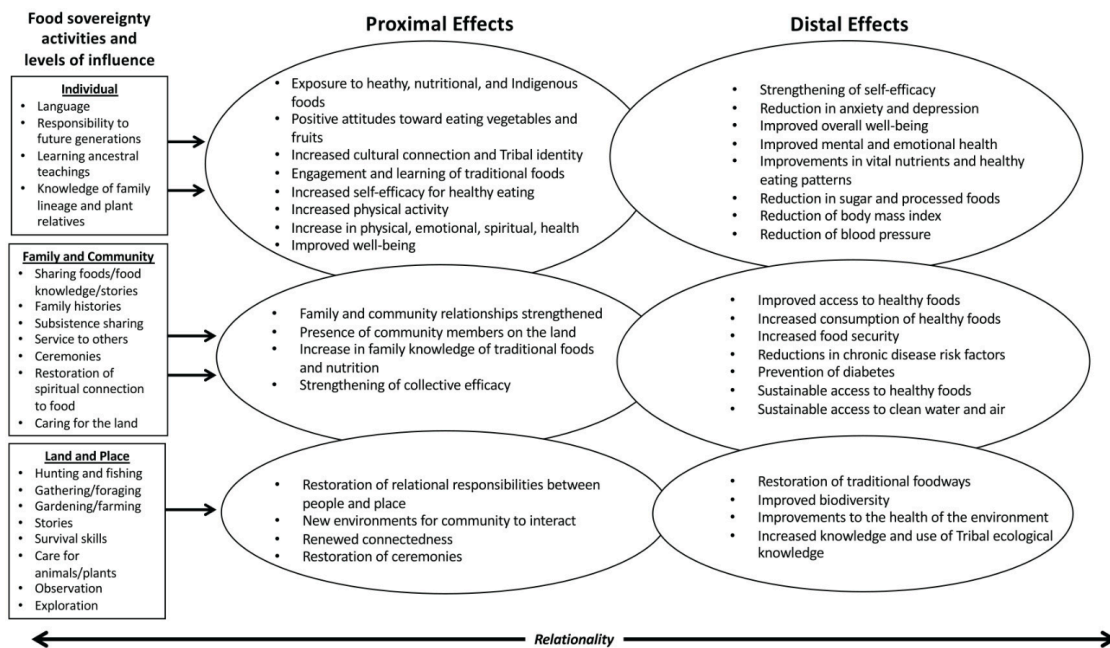
redemption” (Freire, 1972) is connected to food sovereignty, access to traditional and decolonized diets, and restoring collective memory. Several participants pointed to their varied connection to the land, which is connected to cultural resurgence of re-learning, passing down traditional food knowledges, and healing diet-related colonial trauma (Bodirsky & Johnson, 2008).

Storying is valuable in transmitting cultural knowledges and developing theory—“our stories are our theories” (Brayboy, 2005). Participants reflected on their own sense of resistance, survival, and healing, and offered myriad frames, intentionality, and stories of care. These acts, such as contextualizing cuisines histories against racism or hybridities and fusions that exists because of colonialism and imperialism, involve the restoration of historical memory by “reconnecting, strengthening, or staying connected to their ethno-racial roots” (Chavez Duenas et al., 2019, p. 55). At individual, familial, and community levels, we see how food stories, rhetoric, and practices can shape a ‘food pedagogy’ for the oppressed Other (Freire, 1972). Participants named food insecurity, agricultural complex, and migrant exploitation, as communal sites for resistance. Some participants named recovering a sense of ownership and pride with their cultural foods against assimilatory pressures, while being supported in relationships, mindfulness, and experiences of being reciprocally nurtured. Amadeo’s fondness for pizzelles helped him connect to his Italian heritage, where it felt more difficult to connect with Thai recipes given family contexts. Yi’s attention to technique and ultimately, the spirit of caring, carried on their teachings from their parents. Echoing chefs who desired to “see who I was and...put that on a plate” (Liu, 2021, para. 51), participants articulated their

creativity, adventurous spirit, and aesthetic inclination in expression, celebration, and commemoration.

Connecting to Indigenous Food Sovereignty

Indigenous food sovereignty refers to the sacred responsibilities in honoring our relations between land, culture, spirit, and the future (Morrison, 2011). Jernigan et al. (2023) describe how food sovereignty looks different across indigenous communities in their respective localities and grassroots approaches. Health is physical and deeply tied to indigenous worldviews, self-determination, and restoration of relational responsibilities with plant and animal relatives (Jernigan et al., 2023). Using an Indigenous approach to wellbeing urges us to engage in decolonial ways of understanding our interbeing—self, other, plants, animals, land, here and the now, the past and the future. In Figure 2, Jernigan and colleagues (2023) emphasize the importance of cultural continuity and self-determination as connected to Indigenous people's proximal and distal effects of health.

Figure 72*Conceptual Framework of Potential Health Effects of Indigenous Food Sovereignty**Initiatives*

Note. Jernigan and colleague’s figure elucidates potential proximal and distal health effects from individual, familial and community, and land and place initiatives that support Indigenous food sovereignty. From “Food Sovereignty and Health: A Conceptual Framework to Advance Research and Practice,” by V.B.B. Jernigan, C.J. Nguyen, T.L. Maudrie, L.X. Demientieff, J.C. Black, R. Mortenson, R.E. Wilbur, K.R. Clyma, M. Lewis, and S.V. Lopez, *Health Promotion Practice*, 24(6), p. 1072, 2023.

Multiple participants and their primary food teachers understood the importance of local harvest, connecting to soil and water, and caring approach to resources; the intergenerational transmission of these knowledges, and attention to our interconnectedness orients us to an interconnected struggle for Indigenous land rights, self-determination, and cultural connection as well-being. By supporting the transmission of traditional food knowledges and practices, nurturing cultural ways of knowing and

caring, and strengthening family and communal relations, these support social, emotional, physical well-being outcomes as well as cultural connectedness (Chavez Duenas et al., 2019; Jernigan et al., 2023; Quetulio-Navarra et al., 2018). Gartaula et al. (2018) developed a Flip-Coin Model of Food Wellbeing based off food wellbeing studies in Southeast Asia and Nepal (Niehof et al., 2018) to denote two dimensions of food security and food sovereignty with objective, subjective, and relational dimensions. Their incorporation of emic perceptions and etic measurements included attention to food availability, access, sufficiency and quality, food utilization, climatic variations, people's experiences, social relations, cultural frames, and institutional structures that influence such outcomes (Gartaula et al., 2018). Among their findings was the importance of food being culturally acceptable and according to food preferences (Niehof et al., 2018), and supporting commensality to strengthen social bonds, particularly through slametams—communal meals—among Indonesians resettling from 2001 landslides (Quetulio-Navarra et al., 2018). In this study, participants voiced the importance of respecting food preferences, cultural foods, and the care that is experienced through commensality, as well as the importance of food access, seasonal variations, and institutional structures that impact their food wellbeing.

The HEART model, as well as an indigenous food sovereignty framework, captures well-being and decolonization of food practices as interrelated and integral in food engagement. The sharing of food, knowledge, and stories was an essential part of learning about participants' family histories. Service to others and subsistence sharing was also named as tradition around cultural holidays. A few participants spoke about their backyard gardens as a site to understand stewardship and restoring their relationality

with the land. Understanding local control and efforts to preserve cultural continuity can be health promoting. Food is uniquely from the land—even among foods that can be lab-grown, they are made material through the living elements of the earth. Our consumption of food is directly related to our connection to the land. Jernigan (2024) also vocalized the restoration of knowledge as a key spiritual component of health—by keeping and sharing stories, ancestors and their knowledges are kept alive and central to our relearning. Increasing people’s connectivity to food plants and food medicine increases understanding about our own communities and knowledges—where we come from and how to nurture our sacred connections to others.

Implications

Clinical Interventions

The work of therapy, from a liberation psychology view, is for recovering historical memory, de-ideologizing everyday experiences, cultivating individual and community strengths and virtues, and moving towards psychological freedom (Martín-Baró, 1994). In our clinical work, more efforts can be placed in understanding how well-being is understood, cultural connections and strengths, and building activities of caring. Given that food is an essential component of survival, we can take more care to help clients think through food beyond the lens of physical nutrition. What does it mean to nourish their bodies and spirit relationally? What have they been taught about their food practices in relation to family or community? How can food help them connect to their sense of origin, ancestors, spirituality, and land? When clients hear advice to get 8 hours of sleep, exercise about 30 minutes a day, or eat things that are nutritious, we can instead engage more curiously and intentionally about their connections to themselves and others

to explore what fits them well such as: eating with a loved one can encourage more connection over a meal, eating something home-cooked can nurture a sense of self-efficacy and traditional knowledge (while attending to energy levels and resources), exploring recipes with meaning (familial, community, cultural), and thinking about the spiritual act of honouring their bodies and their interconnectedness.

We offered this study as an intervention in making time and space to intentionally engage in culturally-significant and embodied practices. Everyday practices can be imbued with new meaning, intention, and alignment to love and care. This can amplify the cultivation of wellness through processes of eating, preparing, or sharing. Observed at the eight month follow-up, several participants in this study noted with appreciation their own journey with food and their sense of cultural connectedness, mindfulness around their food behaviours, and intentionality with nutrition for the body and spirit. Centering people's storytelling, archiving, and documenting efforts (including journaling) can be helpful in cultivating historical memory among clients.

Systemic Interventions

Our well-being is holistic and grounded in care, and our care for one another is tied to our interconnected struggles. Most participants spoke to the importance of food's connection to their cultural self, articulating a process of coming to food by tracing historical memory. As we encourage people to deepen their roots, the HEART model talks about this fourth phase of liberation tied to cultivating a social justice orientation. We are connected to broader systems and the cultural development of people is connected to the land. Connecting to local and grassroots programming, such as supporting indigenous food sovereignty initiatives, community fridge and kitchen

programming for continued knowledge keeping, public health policies around holistic food wellbeing, funding for cultural gatherings and celebrations, and gleaning teams for food insecurity can be some avenues to support the strengthening of our cultural connections and work toward dismantling oppressive systems.

Limitations

I chose to conduct this study with LGBTQ+ BIPOC to better understand our varied possibilities of healing. While the sample is too small for any claims to representation, some of our shared experiences can be illuminating as a possible avenue for people to understand their own food wellbeing, histories, and journey. Future studies can benefit from a mixed-methods approach, with quantitative measures of people's experience of well-being, like Outcome Questionnaire 45 (OQ-45; Lambert et al., 2004), cultural pride questionnaires, racial socialization measures, or identity affirmation questionnaires. In addition, more purposeful exploration of multiracial participants' experience of their multiple cultural connections and roots would be beneficial for interventions aimed at building resistance and resilience. Future research might also benefit from specific engagement with how particular racial, ethnic, or cultural groups engage with food practices and their spiritual or religious meanings.

Conclusion

Participants offered rich, colourful, and beautiful stories that communicated their experiences of care, comfort, nostalgia, and hybridity through oral histories, intergenerational connections, embodied intake of food, and personal tensions. Understanding food's healing potential within the interwoven experience of caring and knowledge-making is helpful to understand holistic interventions and utilize for

collective liberation, particularly within multiply marginalized communities. Participants offered their food wisdoms, practices, and memories to align themselves closer to daily avenues of caring, deepen their historical and cultural connections, and make new traditions and knowledges to remember. Exploring avenues to nourish our bodies, souls, and connections with one another and to the land with more intention and reflection, enhances these efforts of care, which can be felt, tasted, and made material. These efforts of care are integral to building communities within the broader historical consciousness for social justice.

As we consider the care work and knowledge that is concretized in our food practices, the work of healing involves the continual unraveling of our histories as well as transmission of traditional and hybrid practices for the future. We can resist collectively by honoring our interbeing and interlocking struggles through indigenous food sovereign initiatives, remembering our cultural roots and strengths, and organizing with care for the strengths and interconnections within and between our diverse communities and experiences.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Onboarding Script

Hello ___! It's very nice to meet you. How's your week/day been going?

[PAUSE FOR SMALL TALK]

Thank you so much for making the time to speak with me today. I'll be doing some introductions, invite you to share whatever you personally feel comfortable with, discuss the three parts of the study and see if it's still something you'd like to do, confirm some details you've provided in the survey, discuss my hopes around collaborating, ask for your hopes and views, ask about how you'd like to be credited and compensated, and have room for some other questions. How does that sound?

INTRODUCTION: So, I'm Elizabeth, I use she/her pronouns. I'm a fourth year PhD student in Logan/Sihiviogoi, Utah; I was born in Vancouver, BC, lived in Hong Kong and Basel before my mother decided to immigrate back and settle my sister and I in Tkaronto/Toronto. I'm very close with them both and I lived there for about 15 years before I left to the states for school in 2019. I'm a 1.5 gen Chinese-Canadian, Anglican, lesbian, cisgender woman. I'm also a dancer and survivor. I really like eating and cooking.

BACKGROUND: This project was borne out of how I coped being in Logan, Utah the past four years and wanting to connect with other individuals with similar intersections, and understand their complexities, differences, and nuances and think about the rich, dynamic, layered journeys that people have taken to arrive to where they are now. I used food, cooking, eating as a way to understand my histories, and connections to my family further, and also as a way to connect with community here. I ate with my mother and sister at the dinner table every day until we had to live separately because of school or work – it was an adjustment to live and eat alone at dinner time. I'm hoping that I can learn more from you and what your relationship to food is like, perhaps what it has taught you and what it looks like in everyday ways.

[PAUSE FOR THEIR INTRODUCTION]

Thank you so much for sharing that! I'm excited to learn more about you and your story. I hope that this might be a beneficial experience for you too. So, for the study, **[SHARE SCREEN for PDF INSTRUCTIONS]** there are three parts to this. I'll also send you the instructions and link after our call today.

[GO OVER THE THREE PARTS, explain ask, method, time commitment, ask what they think]

Great! I'm so glad you're still interested and you'd like to participate. To clarify, I would like to confirm some what you've shared as identifiers...once I read them, you can let me know if you'd like to keep those as they are or make any changes.

COLLABORATION: It is really important for me that with research, that this is made by and for the community. There's a heavy and long history of exploitation and extraction, especially for BIPOC queer and trans folk. You are free to not do anything at any time, just let me know and we can stop. The last study I did, I ended up sharing it in several spaces, a collaborator wrote "love letters" and doodles, and I'm currently in the middle of making some art to honour the stories. I'll be checking with you about how I'm interpreting your stories/narratives and ask for your feedback... if you have some ideas for how you'd like this information to be used, or your vision for collaboration, or any hopes/expectations, I'd also love to hear them. I have typically kept participants in the know for where and how the information is shared – is this something you'd be interested in?

[SPACE FOR PARTICIPANTS TO SHARE]

CREDITING AND COMPENSATION: How would you like to be credited? Some people have provided a preferred alias, some have provided first name, some have provided twists on their names, and others have provided full names. You can change your mind at a later point too.

How would you like to be compensated? There are two options of an electronic gift card and a cheque that will be mailed to you. At the end of the study, I'll send the total \$80 for completing it, and then when you provide your feedback after I send my summaries, I'll send another \$20.

FOLLOWUP: Great, thank you so much again for your time today! To sum up, I'll follow up with an email, and you'll start your photovoice today. In two weeks, you'll hear from me again to set up for our zoom interview. Please feel free to reach out before that if you have any questions or concerns.

Appendix B. Instructions for Participants

Photovoice (Part 1 – each documentation set \$25, \$50 total)

Take a few minutes to think about your personal journey with food. What has food taught you about your culture? What have you learnt about yourself through food? What are some significant features of food as it relates to who you are and your wellbeing?

You will have two weeks to complete this first part.

1. Choose **two** moments to document a food-related event significant to you.
2. Please take **3-5 pictures for each chosen moment**.
3. The pictures can be about anything: process, planting, harvesting, delivering, cleaning, cooking, sharing, eating, praying, rituals, ingredients, procurement, grocery-shopping, preparation, dedication, people, places, or feelings.

Zoom Interview (Part 2 – approx. 1 hour, \$30)

I will send you an email for a calendar booking two weeks from the start of the photovoice, and then a reminder email one-day before our interview.

1. Prior to our zoom interview, please upload your photos onto box. If you would like some features blurred out, please feel free to do so. If you have submitted photos and change your mind about them, please let me know too.
2. We will be discussing your photos, as well as a few other questions I will have prepared. There will also be time for you to ask questions or share anything else you think is important for me to know.

Follow up – Member Checking (Part 3 – \$20)

I will provide a summary of what we wrote in relation to what you have shared (photos and interview), our “results” so to speak.

1. Please read our summary of your story.
2. Please provide any feedback on whether we have captured your story accurately.
3. Please let us know if there are any changes to be made about our understanding of you.
4. Let us know if there was any impact of participation on well-being and your subsequent food practices.

Appendix C. Interview Questions

1. What has food taught you about yourself, your culture, and your histories?
 - a. What are some of your values or beliefs about food?
 - b. Who are your teachers about food? What have you learnt?
 - c. How does food relate to your identity (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, size)?
2. How do you define healing? What does healing mean for you?
 - a. How might food be healing for you?
 - b. What is food's impact on your sense of well-being?
 - c. How do you express yourself through food?
 - d. How do you celebrate with food?
 - e. What are your favourite foods and why?
3. Tell me about the two food moments you have selected.
 - a. What is its significance to you?
 - b. How did you choose them?
 - c. Tell me about the context of the moment (Who are the people involved? What was the event? Where was this held? What were you feeling?)
 - d. How are these food moments part of your everyday routine or practice with food?
4. What was the documentation process like for you?
 - a. Was there anything you noticed about what you chose to share or not share?
 - b. Anything surprise you about the process of reflecting?
 - c. What routines or differences have you noticed about your relationship with food?
5. Is there anything else that you'd like me to know that's important and meaningful to your relationship with food?

Appendix D. Follow-Up Questions

Dear [Participant Name, (Alias)],

It has been several months since we last spoke, and this is a results section that includes stories from 13 other participants. This is the last part of the study and your feedback is so greatly appreciated and important to how I hold and interpret your stories.

1. Please read the summary pages 1-2 and 79-80. Please search your name (Control/Command F) throughout the document, and then answer the following questions.
 - a. Do you have any feedback on whether I've understood your story accurately?
 - b. Is there anything you'd like me to add or change or take out?

2. Please let me know more about your experience in this study.
 - a. Was there any impact for you in terms of wellbeing? A spectrum of detrimental to no impact to beneficial impact is all welcome! Your honest feedback helps me.
 - b. Have you thought about your food practices more, felt differently about them, or shifted some of your food practices since participating?

If you're able to send this back to me by April 5 Sunday, that'd be lovely! After I receive your response and answers, I'll send the final part of compensation, \$20 USD. Thank you!

Warmth,
Elizabeth

Vita

EDUCATION & TRAINING

PhD Candidate, Combined Clinical/Counselling Psychology,

Utah State University

2019 – Present

Chair: Renee Galliher, PhD

Dissertation: Everyday food practices as pedagogy and healing for spiritual and religious LGBTQ+ BIPOC

Thesis: Everyday positive identity experiences among spiritual and religious LGBTQ+ BIPOC

**MA, Women & Gender Studies, University of Toronto, Women & Gender Studies Institute
Sexual Diversity Studies' Collaborative Program Certificate**

2015 – 2016

Chair: Dina Georgis, PhD

Master's Major Research Project: Love offerings: A queer and sacred method

Honours BSc, Psychology Specialist, Women & Gender Studies Minor with distinction,

University of Toronto, Trinity College

2010 – 2015

Advisor: Charles Helwig, PhD

Undergraduate Research Project: Children's evaluations of same-sex relationships and its relation to their family's religion and religiosity

PUBLICATIONS

PEER-REVIEWED

1. **Grace Wong, E.**, Galliher, R. V., Pradell, L., Roanhorse, T., Hueneman, H. (2022). Everyday positive identity strategies for spiritual and religious LGBTQ+ BIPOC. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, 22(1), 35-50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15283488.2021.1996364>
2. Pradell, L., Parmenter, J.G., Galliher, R.V., **Grace Wong, E.**, Martin, A., Huenemann, H., Rowley, L., & South, S. (2023). Body maps depict how sexual objectification shapes non-binary people relating to their bodies. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, 23(4), 332-346. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15283488.2023.2222303>
3. Parmenter, J. G., Galliher, R. V., **Grace Wong, E.**, & Perez, D. (2021). An intersectional analysis of LGBTQ+ people of color's access to LGBTQ+ community resilience. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 68(6), 629–641. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000578>
4. Pradell, L., Parmenter, J.G., Galliher, R.V., **Grace Wong, E.**, Rowley, L., Huenemann, H., & South, S. (Accepted). The sexual objectification experiences of non-binary people: Embodied impacts and acts of resistance. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*.

5. Parmenter, J. G., **Grace Wong, E.**, Khan, N., Pradell, L., Galliher, R. V. (Accepted). "Even when I feel alone, I always know I'm not really alone.": An intersectional analysis of LGBTQIA+ BIPOC's experiences of community and resilience. *Feminism & Psychology*.
6. González Vera, J. M., Domenech Rodríguez, M. M., Navarro Flores, C. M., Vázquez, A., San Miguel, G. G., Phan, M. L., Bera, J., **Grace Wong, E.**, Klimczak, K., Papa, L. A., & Estrada, J. (Accepted). *Invisible wounds: Testimony of microaggressions from the experience of clinicians of color in training*. Department of Psychology, Utah State University.

IN PREPARATION

7. **Grace Wong, E.**, Galliher, R. V., Pradell, L., Kurchina-Tyson, A., Chi, K. Roanhorse, T., Hueneman, H. (in preparation) Illustrative maps and everyday voice clips among spiritual and religious LGBTQ+ BIPOC.

NON-PEER REVIEWED

1. **Grace, E.** (2015). An inside to 界面 ("Saving face") and being out. *LooseLeaf Asian Canadian Literary and Visual Arts Magazine*, 1, 31-35.
2. Seghal, A. & **Wong, E. G.** (Eds.). (2015). *Intersections: Women & Gender Studies Undergraduate Research Journal*. Toronto: University of Toronto Arts & Science Student Union.
3. **Wong, E. G.** (2012). Why domestic work is a feminist issue. *Intersections: University of Toronto Undergraduate Journal in Women & Gender Studies*, 3, 39-44.
4. **Wong, E. G.** (2013). *John 17: Meditations on Rest* [Booklet]. University of Toronto Chinese Canadian Christian Fellowship.

CREATIVE OUTPUTS

5. **Grace Wong, E.** (2023, March). Who is the guy in the relationship? [Monologue]. *Birds & Bees Monologues*. Utah State University Sexual Health Fair. Logan, UT.
6. **Wong, E. G.** (2020, July). The wave of the future [Blackout poetry, mixed media]. *Black Lives Matter Collection*, International Student Council, Utah State University. Logan, UT.
7. **Wong, E. G.** (2017, June). Love I/&/Unfoldings [Illustration, pen]. *Our Future is Queer exhibition*. Nuit Rose: A Queer Art and Performance Festival. Toronto, ON.

EDITORIAL EXPERIENCE

- 2016-19 **Managing Editor**, *New Understandings* (NU), Nuance
- 2015-16 **Editor**, *!Aberrations? Women & Gender Studies Graduate Journal*
- 2011-15 **Co-Editor-in-Chief**, *Intersections Women & Gender Studies Undergraduate Journal*
- 2014-15 **Senior Editor** of the Social Sciences, *ARBOR Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Journal*
- 2012-14 **Senior Editor**, *Inkblot Psychology Undergraduate Journal*
- 2013-14 **Editor**, *Hardwire Sexual Diversity Studies Undergraduate Journal*

CONFERENCES & PRESENTATIONS

NATIONAL PRESENTATIONS

1. **Grace Wong, E.**, Galliher, R., Chi, K., Pradell, L., Cheboski, C., & Chung, J. (2024, January). *Everyday food practices as knowledge and healing among LGBTQ+ BIPOC* [symposium]. National Multicultural Conference and Summit, Wayfinding: Navigating Transformational Change. Santa Fe, NM.
2. González Vera, J. M., Phan, M. L., & **Grace Wong, E.** (2023, October). *Las heridas invisibles: Testimony of microaggressions from the experience of BIPOC student clinicians* [Roundtable]. National Latinx Psychological Association 21st Annual Conference: Walking With Our Ancestres, Chicago, IL.
3. Alexander, J.J., Hardiman, A., & **Grace Wong, E.** (2023, October). *Centering the marginalized: Mitigating mental health issues while enhancing retention initiatives at predominately white institutions* [Roundtable]. University of Tennessee One Health and Humanities Days: Arts & Humanities Interventions, Knoxville, UT.
4. Linares S., Domenech Rodríguez, M., **Grace Wong, E.**, & Agbeyaka, S. (2023, September). *Heart2Heart: A healing space for BIPOC LGBTQ+ people who experience discrimination* [Presentation-CE credit]. GLMA 41st Annual Conference on LGBTQ+ Health: Power In Every Voice, Virtual.
5. **Grace Wong, E.**, Alexander, J. J. & Hardiman, A. (2023, March). *Centering the Marginalized: Mitigating mental health issues while enhancing retention initiatives at predominately white institutions* [Roundtable]. Association for Prevention Teaching and Research's 80th Annual Teaching Prevention: Leadership for Health Equity, New Orleans, LA.
6. Linares S., Domenech Rodríguez, M. & **Grace Wong, E.** (2022, May). *Heart2Heart: A space for BIPOC LGBTQ+ health professionals in training who have experienced discrimination and its associated distress* [Workshop]. GLMA Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ+ equality, Virtual.
7. **Grace Wong, E.** (2022, March). *Illustrating positive identity development through journey maps among spiritual/religious LGBTQ+ BIPOC* [Poster]. 28th Annual International Society for Research on Identity Conference, New Orleans, LA.
8. **Grace Wong, E. (Chair)**, Parmenter, J. & Pradell, L. (2022, January). *Critique and celebration: LGBTQ+ identity and community experiences in North America* [Symposium-CE credit]. 12th Biennial National Multicultural Conference and Summit: Intergenerational Survivance: Rooting Psychology through Indigenous & Community Wisdoms, Virtual.
9. Chapple, L., Collins, L., DeeLove, P., **Grace, E.**, Patterson, C., & Ranger, T. M., (2021, October). *Queer representation: The psychological impact of seeing ourselves in media* [Panel]. 5th Annual ClexaCon Convention, Las Vegas, NV.
10. **Grace Wong, E.** (2021, July). *Everyday positive identity and resilience of spiritual and religious LGBTQ+ BIPOC* [Paper, LGBTQ+ Cultural Competence session]. APA Division 45: The Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity, and Race 6th Biennial Research Conference: Structural Racism: Resilience, Resistance, and New Insights, Virtual.
11. Galindo, M., **Grace, E.**, Kanbari, A., Salao, C. & Williams, K. (2021, March). *Más allá del aula: La SDSR en el arte y la cultura / Beyond the classroom: SRHR in arts and culture* [Panel]. Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, Sexual and Reproductive Rights: Cross-Regional Dialogues to Advance and Amplify Our Movement, Virtual.
12. **Grace, E.** (2020, October). *Self-love, self-touch: Rediscovering your body through dance* [Conference Session]. #MeTooLGBTQ Virtual Conference 2020: Resilience is Resistance, Virtual.

REGIONAL/LOCAL PRESENTATIONS

1. **Grace Wong, E.** (2024, March). *Heart2Heart* [Workshop]. Utah State University Graduate Students of Colour Association Spring Writing Retreat, Bear Lake, UT.
2. **Grace Wong, E.**, Linares S., Agbeyaka, S., & Mukasa, M. (2024, January-February). *Heart2Heart Series* [Workshop series]. Diversity Class, Mrs. Caroline Smith. Ridgeline Highschool, Logan, UT.
3. Linares S., Domenech Rodríguez, M., **Grace Wong, E.**, & Agbeyaka, S. (2023, September). *Heart2Heart: A healing space for BIPOC LGBTQ+ people who experience discrimination* [Presentation-CE credit]. GLMA 41st Annual Conference on LGBTQ+ Health: Power In Every Voice, Virtual.
4. **Grace Wong, E.** (2023, April). *Mindfulness* [Workshop]. Utah State University School of Graduate Studies, Graduate Training Series, Logan, UT.
5. **Grace Wong, E.** (2023, April). *Conflict management: Active listening and perspective-taking* [Training]. Cache Pride Center Mandatory Volunteer Training, Logan, UT.
6. **Grace Wong, E.** (2023, March). *Qualitative methods: Ethics, care, & collaboration* [Presentation]. Utah State University Acceptance & Commitment Therapy Research Group, Logan, UT.
7. **Grace Wong, E.** (2023, February). *Heart2Heart: A space for BIPOC graduate students* [Workshop]. Utah State University Graduate Students of Color Association Spring Writing Retreat, St. George, UT.
8. **Grace Wong, E.**, Linares S., & Agbeyaka, S. (2023, January). *Heart2Heart Series* [Workshop series]. Diversity Class, Mrs. Caroline Smith. Ridgeline Highschool, Logan, UT.
9. **Grace Wong, E.** (2022, October). *Conflict management: Active listening and perspective-taking*. Utah State University School of Graduate Studies, Graduate Training Series, Logan, UT.
10. **Grace Wong, E.** (2022, October). *Heart2Heart: A space for BIPOC who have experienced discrimination and its associated distress* [Workshop]. Utah State University Diversity Summit in the Experimental Analysis of Behavior, Logan, UT.
11. **Grace Wong, E.** (2022, October). *Heart2Heart: A space for BIPOC graduate students*. Utah State University Graduate Students of Colour Association Fall Writing Retreat, Bear Lake, UT.
12. **Grace Wong, E.** (2022, August). *Self-love, self-touch: Mindful movement and dance* [Workshop]. GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ+ Equality, Online.
13. Pradell, L. (Chair), **Grace Wong, E.**, & Galliher, R. V. (2022, April). *Beyond Publishing: Disseminating Community-based Research* [Roundtable]. Utah State University Eastern 7th Annual Diversity Conference, Blanding, UT.
14. **Grace Wong, E.**, & Juarez, B. (2022, March). *USU Safe Passages for U (SP4U): Introduction to cultural competence* [Workshop]. Utah State University Mental Health Week, Logan, UT.
15. **Grace Wong, E.** (2022, March). *Connecting with your namesake* [Workshop]. Utah State University Graduate Students of Colour Association Spring Writing Retreat, Logan, UT.
16. Pradell, L. (Moderator), Crowell, S., Johnson, R., Opayemi, O., & **Grace Wong, E.** (2022, February). *Intersections on inclusion, critical conversations in the academy: Pride in the field* [Panel]. Utah State University Libraries and the Center for Intersectional Gender Studies & Research, Logan, UT. https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/inter_inclusion/6

17. Linares S., Domenech Rodríguez, M. & **Grace Wong, E.** (2022, February). *Heart2Heart: A space for BIPOC students who have experienced discrimination and its associated distress* [Workshop]. Utah State University Audre Lorde Self-Care Series: Racial Healing, Logan, UT.
18. Linares S., Domenech Rodríguez, M. & **Grace Wong, E.** (2021, October). *Heart2Heart: A space for BIPOC who have experienced discrimination and its associated distress* [Workshop]. Utah State University's 3rd Annual Inclusive Excellence Symposium, Logan, UT.
19. Abulbasal, R., Alexander, J.J, **Grace Wong, E.**, Hardiman, A., Chowdhury-Magaña, N., & Yan, L. (2021, October). *Intersections on inclusion, critical conversations in the academy: Graduate student voices* [Panel]. Utah State University Libraries and the Center for Intersectional Gender Studies & Research, Logan, UT.
https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/inter_inclusion/5/
20. Alexander, J.J., **Grace Wong, E.**, Lam, K., Yan, L. (2021, April). *The hyper-sexualization of Asian women: A panel review* [Panel]. Utah State University Sexual Assault and Anti-Violence Information Office Coffee & Conversation Series, Logan, UT.
21. **Grace, E.** (2021, February). *Self-love, self-touch: Healing and building trust your body through dance* [Workshop]. McMaster University Pride Community Center, Hamilton, ON, Canada.
22. **Grace, E.** (2019, December). *Self-love, self-touch: Rediscovering your body through dance* [Workshop]. Toronto Rape Crisis Center/Multicultural Women Against Rape, Toronto, ON, Canada.
23. **Grace, E.** (2019, December). *If the heels fit...A sensual dance workshop* [Workshop]. Asian Community AIDS Services: Asian Queer Alliance, Toronto, ON, Canada.
24. **Grace, E.** & Han, E. (2019, March). *A Nuance-ed look at (Im)migrant sexual health and sexuality* [Accepted panel]. University of Toronto Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies, Sex Salon Speaker Series, Toronto, ON, Canada.
25. **Grace, E.** & Han., E. (2018, May). *Nuance: A new digital publication on the intersections of sex, sexual health, and (im)migrant experiences* [Presentation]. Women's College Research Institute Women's Xchange Symposium: Healthy sexuality and relationships in the era of #metoo, Toronto, ON, Canada.
26. Adachi-Amitay, M., **Grace, E.**, Han, E., Hari., S., & Ramsawakh, M. (2018, February). *Nuanced conversations: an intersectional and inclusive approach to sex in (im)migrant communities* [Panel]. Playground 6th Annual Sexuality Conference, Toronto, ON, Canada.
27. **Wong, E.G.** (2015, February). *Healthy bodies and the Normate under neoliberalism* [Accepted Paper]. Inter-University/College Disability Conference Reclaiming Our Bodies & Minds: Intermingling Disability Communities: Smashing Diagnoses, Toronto, ON, Canada.
28. **Grace, E.** (2014, August). *Meditations on love within 1 Corinthians 11* [Workshop]. Multi-Faith Centre: Que(e)rying Religions/Christianity, Toronto, ON, Canada.
29. Fitzsimons, F., **Wong, E.G.**, & Zhang, M. (2013). *Perceptions of democratic families and schools and children's psychological well-being in urban and rural China* [Poster]. University of Toronto Undergraduate Research Fair, Toronto, ON, Canada.

LECTURES

30. **Grace Wong, E.** (2023, April). *Multicultural Feminist Therapy* [Lecture]. REACH Peers, Utah State University. Logan, UT.
31. **Grace Wong, E.** (2023, April). *Emotion Focused Therapy* [Lecture]. REACH Peers, Utah State University. Logan, UT.
32. **Grace Wong, E.** (2020, April). *LGBTQ+ identity development* [Guest lecture]. PSY4320: Psychology of Gender. Utah State University. Logan, UT.
33. **Grace Wong, E.** (2020, February). *Feminisms and intersectionality* [Guest lecture]. PSY4320: Psychology of Gender. Utah State University. Logan, UT.
34. **Grace Wong, E.** (2019, November). *Emotion and gender* [Guest lecture]. PSY1010: Introduction to Psychology. Utah State University. Logan, UT.
35. **Grace Wong, E.** (2019, October). *Motivation* [Guest lecture]. PSY1010: Introduction to Psychology. Utah State University. Logan, UT

CLINICAL EXPERIENCES

THERAPY

Graduate Clinical Assistant

Practicum Student Therapist

09/22 – 05/23, 09/21 – 05/22

Counseling and Psychological Services, *Utah State University*

- Provided psychotherapy to students; attended weekly staffing meetings
- Co-instructed REACH Peer class (mental health psychoeducation and skills), lectured on Emotions-Focused Therapy and Multicultural Feminist Therapy
- Supervised one undergraduate REACH peer over the year
- Provided outreach for undergraduate and graduate students through: Suicide Prevention via USU Helps, Interpersonal and Mindfulness skills workshops via Graduate Training Series
- Presenting problems included: anxiety and depression concerns, cultural and adjustment concerns, academic performance, discrimination, gender and sexual identity exploration, grief and loss, spiritual/religious/existential concerns, interpersonal concerns, eating and body-image, sleep, self-harm, sexual health, abuse and trauma, Title IX.

Supervisors (Clinical Assistant; Practicum): Amy Kleiner, PhD & Mark Nafziger, PhD

Supervisors (Practicum): Charley Bentley, PhD & Brianne Freeman, MSc

Direct Hours: 332

Practicum Student Therapist

Belva Hansen, *The Family Place*

09/22 – 05/23

- Provided psychotherapy for children, adolescents, adults, and families under grants; attended weekly staffing meetings
- Provided crisis assessments and interventions across the lifespan and community referrals and brief therapy sessions (up to three per client)
- Provided peer training on Broaching and Multicultural Feminist Therapy to staff
- Received training in: Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (TF-CBT), After Deployment, Adaptive Parenting Tools (ADAPT), Attachment, Regulation and Competency (ARC), Mind-Body Bridging (MBB), Sandtray therapy, Utah Coalition Against Sexual Assault Training (UCASA)

- Presenting problems included: dissociation, mood disorders, child abuse and trauma, bullying, domestic violence, discrimination and systemic barriers, behavioural problems, interpersonal problems, occupational concerns, cultural identity, gender exploration, self-esteem, and school performance.

Supervisors: Melanie Domenech Rodríguez, PhD, & Sarah Heiner, EdS, CMHC

Direct Hours: 130

Practicum Student Therapist

Sexual and Gender Minority Support Services, *Sorenson Center for Clinical Excellence*

09/21 – 5/22

- Provided psychotherapy for sexual and gender minority adolescents and adults
- Wrote 2 letters of support for gender-affirming hormone therapy
- Received training in: Time-limited psychodynamic therapy (TLPD), emotion-focused therapy (EFT), WPATH Trans Affirming Care and Practices
- Presenting problems included: attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder, dissociative identity disorder, anxiety and depression concerns, gender exploration, coming out, discrimination, trauma, spiritual/religious/existential crises, interpersonal problems, sleep, self-harm, and learning disabilities

Supervisors: Tyler Lefevor, PhD

Direct Hours: 87

Practicum Student Therapist

Behavioural Health Clinic, *Sorenson Center for Clinical Excellence*

09/20 – 5/21

- Provided psychotherapy and conducted intakes and assessments for adolescents and adults
- Presenting problems included: grief and loss, discrimination, eating and body-image, intellectual disabilities, behavioural problems, autism spectrum disorder, mood disorders, social anxiety disorder, childhood trauma, interpersonal problems, cultural and gender identity concerns, and adjustment issues.
- Batteries included: Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC-3), Brown EF/A, Brown ADD, Conners' Adult ADHD Rating Scales (CAARS), WAIS-IV, WISC-IV, & WJ-IV

Supervisors: Sara Boghosian, PhD & Susan Crowley, PhD

Direct Hours: 96

GROUP THERAPY

Graduate Clinical Assistant

Counseling and Psychological Services, *Utah State University*

09/22 – 05/23

- Led and co-led groups: Understanding Self and Other processes, Faith Challenges support

Supervisors: Monique Frazier, PhD & Chris Chapman, PhD

Direct Hours: 27

Practicum Student Therapist

- Co-led Heart2Heart groups, involving process, support, and psychoeducation on racial microaggressions and microintervention skills

- 8-week group for undergraduate and graduate students, *Utah State University*
- 6-week group for adolescents, *Ridgeline Highschool*, Caroline Smith's diversity class
- 2-week group for graduate students, *International Friends Program*

Supervisor: Melanie Domenech Rodríguez, PhD

Direct Hours: 13

Practicum Student Therapist

Belva Hansen, *The Family Place*

- Co-facilitated 14-week parent-training After Deployment: Adaptive Parenting Tools (ADAPT) from GenerationPMTO
- Co-facilitated 6-week equine-assisted trauma therapy group

Supervisors: Melanie Domenech Rodríguez, PhD, Analee Pacheco, LCSW, & Brooke Hill, CSW

Direct Hours: 30

Practicum Student Therapist

Behavioural Health Clinic, *Sorenson Center for Clinical Excellence*

09/20 – 05/21

- Co-facilitated DBT Skills group for young adults in the community

Supervisors: Sara Boghosian, Ph.D.

Direct Hours: 5

ASSESSMENTS

Practicum Student Therapist

Assessments at Counseling and Psychological Services, *Utah State University*

09/23 – Present, 01/22 – 5/22, 09/20 – 05/21

- Conduct intakes, assessments, and write integrated reports
- Received training in: Buros Center for Testing for ADHD
- Presenting problems included: ADHD, GAD, ASD, (Features) Avoidant Personality Disorder, (Features) Borderline Personality Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, MDD, LD, Other Trauma and Stressor Related Disorder, Persistent Depressive Disorder, Social Anxiety Disorder, Somatic Symptom Disorder.
- Batteries included various developmental, behavioural, socioemotional, cognitive, educational, and neuropsychological assessments including but not limited to: Brown Executive Function/Attention Scales (Brown EF/A), Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS-2 HF), Diagnostic Interview for Anxiety, Mood and Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Neuropsychiatric Disorders (DIAMOND), IVA-AE2, Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI-IV), Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 Restructured Form (MMPI-2-RF), Wender Utah Rating Scale (WURS), Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI), Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS-2), Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS-IV), Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence (WASI-II), Woodcock Johnson (WJ-IV).

Assessment Supervisor: Justin Barker, Ph.D.

Direct Hours: 53 Integrated Reports: 5 (2 in progress)

Practicum Student Therapist

Behavioural Health Clinic, *Sorenson Center for Clinical Excellence*

01/22 – 5/22, 09/20 – 05/21

- Conducted LD and ADHD assessments for adolescents and adults
- Batteries included: Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC-3), Brown EF/A, Brown ADD, Conners' Adult ADHD Rating Scales (CAARS), WAIS-IV, WISC-IV, & WJ-IV

Assessment Supervisor: Marietta Veeder, Ph.D. & Maryellen McClain, Ph.D.

Direct Hours: 24 Integrated Reports: 4

CERTIFICATION and SPECIALIZED TRAINING

2023 **Standard First Aid, CPR, and AED**, Certificate, *Emergency Care & Safety Institute*
Utah Food Handlers Permit, Certificate

2022 **Mind Body Bridging (MBB)**, Certificate, *I-Institute*
Trauma Focused-Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (TF-CBT), Certificate, *Medical University of South Carolina*
Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), Certificate, *Medical University of South Carolina*

2021 **HELPS Suicide Prevention Program**, Facilitator, *Utah State University*
Safe Passages 4U (SP4U) Cultural Competence, Facilitator, *Utah State University*
Heart2Heart (H2H) Racial Distress and Healing, Facilitator, *Utah State University*

2020 **LGBTQ+ Allies Training**, Facilitator, *Utah State University*
Trans 101 Training, Facilitator, *Utah State University*

2019 **Conflict Management Skills course**, Certificate, *University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies*

2018 **Creating Inclusive Spaces for Immigrants and Refugees with In/Visible Disabilities**, Certificate, *Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants*
Mental Health First Aid Certificate, *Mental Health Commission of Canada*

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Facilitator, Native American Summer Mentorship Program (NASMP), 18 students
Utah State University

Summer 2024

- Facilitate NASMP programming for students from Blanding campus; organize socials

Teaching Assistant, Multicultural Psychology (PSY4320) in person, 35 students
Utah State University

Fall 2023 – Present

- Deliver lectures; adapt course content; provide feedback to increase cultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes; hold office hours

Co-Instructor, R.E.A.C.H Peer Program, in person, 10 students
Utah State University

Spring 2023

- Delivered lectures; taught basic counseling skills; provided group supervision of REACH Peers' work with clients and outreach activities

Instructor, Lifespan Development (PSY1100) online, 30 students

Utah State University

Summer 2022

- Engaged students in discussions and modules; graded assignments

Instructor, Psychology of Gender (PSY4230) online, 45 students (Fall & Spring)

Utah State University

2021 – 2022, 2020 – 2021

- Designed new syllabi and assignments; supervised 5 teaching assistants total; delivered course content; engaged students in discussion; provided feedback to increase cultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes; held office hours

Instructor, Introduction to Psychology (PSY1010) online, 45 students

Utah State University

Summer 2021

- Adapted course content; engaged students in discussion and modules; graded assignments; held office hours

Teaching Assistant, Introduction to Research Methods (PSY3500) in person, 35 students

Utah State University

2019-20

- Engaged students in discussions and modules; graded assignments; held office hours

Teaching Assistant, Introduction to Women and Gender Studies (WGS160Y), 160 students

University of Toronto, St. George

2015-16

- Delivered weekly in-person discussion labs; held office hours; graded assignments

SERVICE & VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCES

2023 – Present

Board Member, Health Professionals in Training Co-Chair, *GLMA: Health Professionals*

Advancing LGBTQ+ Equality

- Serve one-year renewable term contributing experiences, knowledge, and skills to forward GLMA's mission; includes service in Policy and Government Affairs Committee, Lesbian Health Fund Advisory Committee

Reviewer, *Lesbian Health Fund*

- Evaluate research proposals for rigorous scientific research in the LHF 2024 Grant Cycle that improve health and well-being of LGBTQ+ women and girls

Board Member, *Cache Pride Center*

- Provide oversight for Cache Pride Center's operations and volunteer training

Program Committee Member, Conference Organizing Team, *National Multicultural*

Conference and Summit 2024

- Assist in program coordination and proposal reviews

2022 – 2024

Psychology Department Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee Member, *Utah State University*

- Implement and support the department's strategic plan with an Annual EDI Action Plan around policies & procedures, recruitment & retention practices, EDI training & programming, and climate
- Deliverables: contributed to creation and distribution of department-wide climate survey; invited colloquium speaker for Cultural Competence/Difficult Dialogues

2020 – 2024

Diversity Advisory & Accreditation Committee Member, Psychology Department, *Utah State University*

- Monitor program's diversity plan and curriculum in compliance with accreditation standards and guidelines
- Deliverables: contributed to Professionalism Standards in program policy and graduate handbook; co-developed proposal for program Diversity Certificate; contributed to amendments, distribution, and analysis of program climate survey

Co-Founder & Co-Chair Collective Healing Pillar, Graduate Students of Colour Association, *Utah State University*

- Deliver communal and racial healing programming with the Inclusion Center, Center for Intersectional Gender Studies & Research, and student organizations

2019 – 2024

Youth Mentor, LGBTQ+ youth nights, *Cache Pride Center*

- Actively engage and build rapport with transgender, nonbinary, and gender diverse youth in Preteen (ages 11-14) and Teen (ages 14-18) nights

2021 – 2022

Combined Program Student Representative, Psychology Department, *Utah State University*

- Advocated for student interests through department chair and program faculty meetings. Deliverables: 3 department scholarships open to international students (FAFSA previously excluded); remediation process now includes support person

Community Consultant, Interspace, *Nuit Blanche North York*

2020– 2022

Health Professional in Training Committee Fellow Chair, *GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality*

- Executed six virtual trainings and support workshops for a national network of LGBTQ+ health professionals: Hormone Replacement Therapy, PEP/PrEP, advocacy panels, Heart2Heart, Mindful Movement

Awards Committee Member, *APA Division 44: Society for the Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*

LGBTQ+ Survivor Taskforce and Clinical/Provider Subcommittee Member, #MeTooLGBTQ Survivor National Conference 2021

2019 – 2020

Judge, Student Research Symposium, *Utah State University*

Reviewer, Student Research Award, *Association for Psychological Science*

Oral Presentation Moderator, Utah Conference on Undergraduate, *Utah State University*

Trans Women of Colour Working Group Member, *Presidential Taskforce APA Division 44 Committee*

Community Needs Assessment Lead, Logan Pride Foundation, Cache Pride Center & Utah State University

2017 – 2019

Face-to-Face Counselor, Advisor & Advocate, *Toronto Rape Crisis Center/Multicultural Women Against Rape*

Planning Committee Member, *TRCC/MWAR's 37th Annual Take Back the Night Rally*
2014 – 2016

WGS Graduate Representative, *University of Toronto Graduate Student Union*

2012 – 2013

Communications Director, *University of Toronto Graduate Race and Ethnicity Caucus*

Women & Gender Studies Union Liaison, *University of Toronto Arts and Sciences Student Union*

GRANTS

2018 – **Women's Xchange 15K Challenge**, *Women's College Research Institute*
2019 \$15,000 awarded Nuance, NU. PI: Eleni Han and Emma Burgess
Evaluating the impact of an online intervention on the sexual health attitudes and behaviours of young (im)migrant women and non-binary people in Toronto.
Role: Input and Advisory & Research Collaborator

2017 – **Youth Opportunity Fund**, *Ontario Trillium Foundation*
2019 \$75,000 awarded Nuance, NU. PI: Emma Burgess and Eleni Han
Storytelling and arts empowerment to diversify sexual health conversations in the GTA.
Role: Community Advisor

HONOURS & AWARDS

2023 **Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Doctoral Fellowship**, \$20,000

- APA Division 44 Distinguished Student Contribution Award**, *American Psychological Association Division 44 Society for the Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*
- Walter R. Borg Scholarship in Applied Practice & Research**, Psychology Department, *Utah State University*, \$2,500
- 2022 **Donald T. Brown GLBT Memorial Scholarship**, *American Group Psychotherapy Association*, \$2,000
- Anthony LaPray Scholarship**, Psychology Department, *Utah State University*, \$2,200
- 2021 **Donald T. Brown GLBT Memorial Scholarship**, *American Group Psychotherapy Association*, \$1,500
- 2020 **Organization of the Year Award (GSCA)**, Robins Memorial Awards, *Utah State University*
- Graduate Fellow**, Center for Intersectional Gender Studies & Research, *Utah State University*, \$1,500
- Research Grants for Psychology Students & Recently Graduated Psychologists of Color**, *APA Commission on Ethnic Minority Recruitment, Retention & Training in Psychology (CEMRRAT)*, \$150
- 2015 **Graduate Entrance Scholarship**, *University of Toronto*, \$5,000
- 2014 **Chancellor's Scholarship**, Frederick Ashbaugh Fund, Trinity College, *University of Toronto*, \$400
- First Place, Dr. Freud Trivia Competition**, Psychology Student Association, *University of Toronto*
- 2011,13 **Manuscript & Hermeneutics Scholarship**, *Ambassadors for Christ in Canada*, \$900
- 2010 **President's Entrance Scholarship**, *University of Toronto*, \$5,000

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

National Latinx Psychological Association

GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ+ Equality

American Group Psychotherapy Association

American Psychological Association

APA Division 35 (Women), Section 5: Psychology of Asian Women

APA Division 44 (Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity)

APA Division 45 (Study of Culture, Ethnicity, and Race)

Psi Chi, International Honor Society in Psychology